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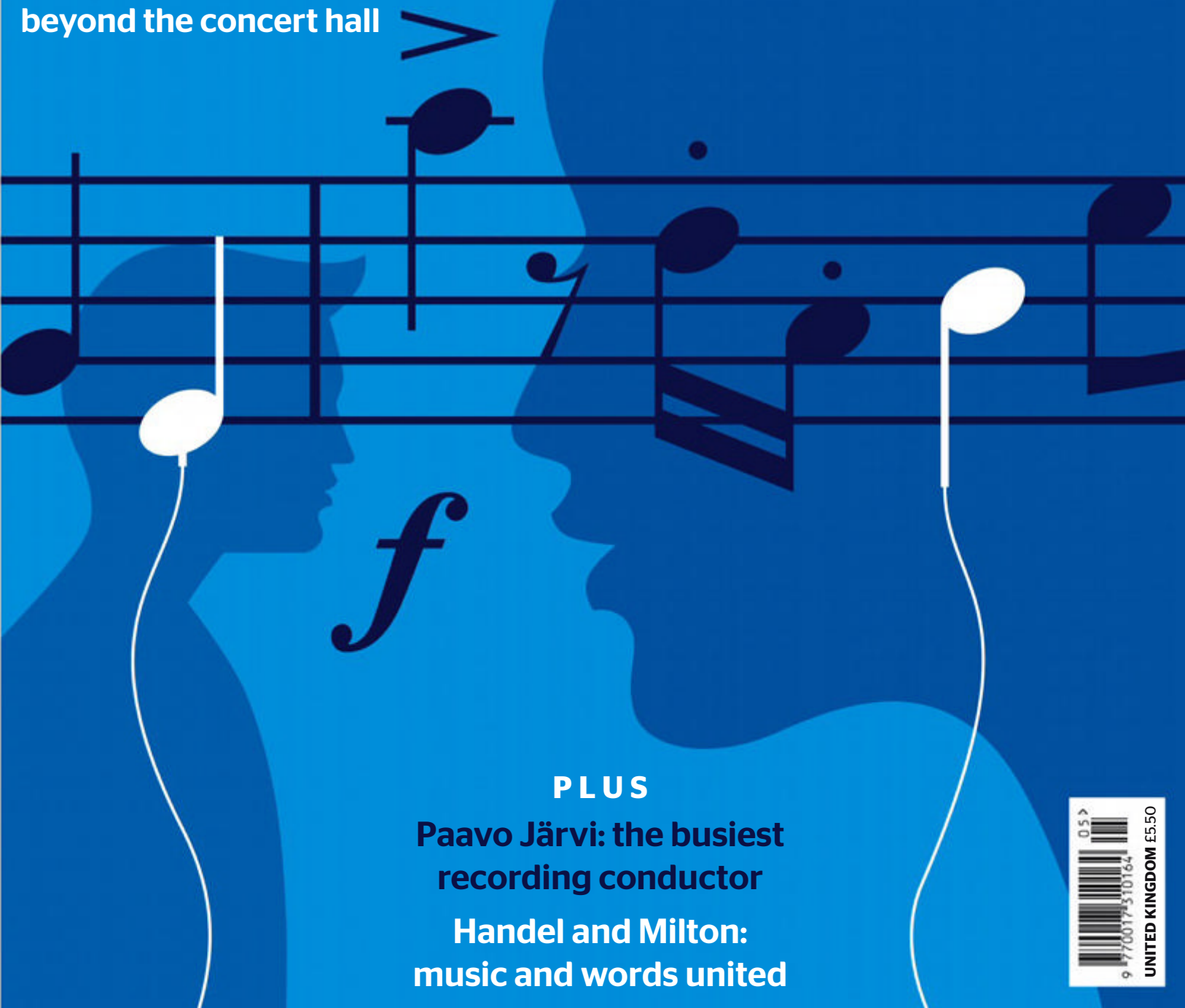
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# CHANDOS

# New Releases



## Disc of the Month Berlioz: Orchestral Works

James Ehnes / Melbourne Symphony Orchestra / Sir Andrew Davis

The virtuosic and nine-times Juno-winning Canadian James Ehnes is centre stage in a new recording of orchestral works by Berlioz, with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Andrew Davis. This recording follows an extraordinarily rare concert in November 2014 with the same forces, in which James Ehnes played two Stradivarius, respectively a viola in the solo part of *Harold en Italie* – 'symphony with a principal viola part' in Berlioz's words – and a violin for the solo in *Réverie et Caprice*, both of which feature here.

CHSA 5155



## Janáček

Orchestral Works, Vol. 2  
Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra /  
Edward Gardner

Some of the greatest programmatic pieces by Janáček feature in this latest volume of our series devoted to his orchestral works, with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and Edward Gardner. 'An excellent project' (*BBC Music*)

CHSA 5156



## D'Indy

Orchestral Works, Vol. 6  
Iceland Symphony Orchestra /  
Rumon Gamba

Our series of recordings of works by Vincent d'Indy now comes to an end. The project has aimed to bring these neglected, eclectic, and richly orchestrated works to a wider audience, confirming Chandos' reputation as a top label in the groundbreaking search for much-overlooked musical gems.

CHSA 5157



## Barry Douglas plays Brahms Vol.4

Barry Douglas's monumental project to record the complete works for solo piano by Johannes Brahms continues, seen by *BBC Music* as 'a triumph of Brahmsian thought, with playing that gets right to the heart of the composer'.

CHAN 10857



## Smith & Handel

Julian Perkins

The internationally acclaimed harpsichordist and early classical music specialist Julian Perkins presents the premiere recording of six Suites for harpsichord by Handel's assistant, John Christopher Smith. This Chaconne release also features an arrangement by Handel of the overture to his opera *Riccardo Primo*.

CHAN 0807

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[www.theclassicalshop.net](http://www.theclassicalshop.net) (24-bit studio quality, lossless, MP3)

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# GRAMOPHONE

## US SOUNDS OF AMERICA

**RECORDINGS & EVENTS** *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

### Elmira Darvarova

The US-based violinist on resurrecting Vernon Duke's Violin Concerto

#### How did you encounter Vernon Duke?

As a classical composer, Vladimir Dukelsky wrote ballets and concert music. But he's better known for his work for Broadway and Hollywood – Gershwin encouraged him in this area, and even suggested he change his name. In the late 1990s the conductor and pianist Scott Dunn orchestrated the neglected Piano Concerto which Duke had written for Rubinstein. Then I became interested in the violin and chamber music works and, in 2009, I gave the New York premiere, with Scott, of Duke's Violin Sonata. Since then we've been performing the chamber works – as well as the Violin Concerto with piano accompaniment – all over the place ahead of this recording.

#### The Concerto has an interesting back-story...

It was an unofficial commission by Jascha Heifetz. When it was finished, he said to Duke: 'I do not find it completely to my satisfaction.' It's a brilliant work that rivals the Prokofiev and Stravinsky concertos, so Heifetz must have had an ulterior motive. Perhaps he didn't want to pay the commission. It was premiered in Boston in 1943 by Ruth Posselt and received

glowing reviews but was then scheduled to be conducted in New York by Bernstein. Perhaps Rodzinski was feeling threatened by Bernstein's rising star, because at the last minute he insisted *he* conduct it. He hadn't rehearsed it, there were bad reviews, and Duke, who was there, said it was a 'terrible day'. Thus the work suffered a premature demise.

#### Why does the work deserve to be heard?

I adore the concerto, and it should enjoy a great comeback. Duke had this double persona as a composer because of the influences he had absorbed from Broadway and Hollywood, and I can hear both sides in this concerto, which makes it very unique.

#### The Violin Sonata is also significant...

It was commissioned by the Polish violinist Roman Totenberg but he only played it once and eventually Duke dedicated it to his friend Israel Baker. It's very challenging, almost like a mini concerto. There are all these grand gestures and yet it's fun to play, too, albeit very difficult! Duke's unbelievable erudition and competence shine through.



#### You discovered the Hommage to Offenbach in the Library of Congress...

During my discussions with Duke's widow, Kay Duke Ingalls (who, along with Ruth Posselt's daughter, Diana Burgin, helped make this CD possible), this piece wasn't mentioned at all, so I was surprised to come across it. The 'Bridge of Sighs' movement is a homage to *The Tales of Hoffmann* and, as a former Met concertmaster, I am always fascinated by pieces with operatic connections.

#### What makes Duke's music significant?

It's immediately stunning. While Prokofiev's concertos possibly need more than one listen to take to, Duke's brilliance makes an immediate impression and his tunes stay with you.

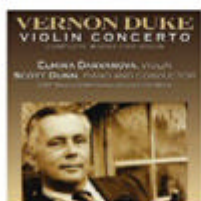
### V Duke

Violin Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Violin Sonata<sup>b</sup>. Hommage to Offenbach<sup>c</sup>. Etude<sup>d</sup>. Capriccio mexicano<sup>e</sup>

<sup>ab</sup>Elmira Darvarova <sup>vn</sup> <sup>d</sup>Kim Laskowski <sup>bn</sup>

<sup>a</sup>ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra, Vienna / <sup>bc</sup>Scott Dunn <sup>pf</sup>

Urlicht Audiovisual © UAV5990 (79' • DDD)



Vladimir Alexandrovich Dukelsky wanted to be taken seriously as a composer, but it wasn't easy. Better known as Vernon Duke, the name George Gershwin suggested the Russian-born musician adopt in America,

he thrived as the composer of Broadway scores and such instant classic songs as 'April in Paris' and 'Autumn in New York'. Yet amid the popular hits, Duke continued to work in the concert realm, the arena of this appealing and necessary disc of his complete violin music.

There are moments when Broadway, jazz and national influences can be heard in these works but Duke (1903-69) was his own compositional spirit. A student in his teens of Reinhold Glière in Kiev, he absorbed the rudiments of his craft and employed them with great skill. The most ambitious work here is the Violin Concerto from 1940-41, a three-movement score reminiscent of Prokofiev in soaring lyricism and potent

drama but also tinged with distinctive harmonic touches.

It's an impressive piece that deserves to be heard, which is also true of the Sonata in D major for violin and piano (1948-49), another work with Russian roots and full of expressive ardour and infectious wit. Duke's gifts as a miniaturist are on ample display in the charming Etude for violin and bassoon and the flavourful *Hommage to Offenbach*. For spicier activity, there's *Capriccio mexicano*, bursting with rhythmic twists and invigorating folk writing.

Violinist Elmira Darvarova makes charismatic work of Duke's challenges on both grand and intimate scales, and she teams to colourful effect with bassoonist Kim

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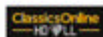
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On the 'boundary lines between music and noise': members of the JACK Quartet, with composer Huck Hodge playing the melodica, performing re[(f)use]

Laskowski, pianist/conductor Scott Dunn and the ORF Radio Symphony Orchestra of Vienna. **Donald Rosenberg**

## Falla • Granados • Turina

**Falla** *Siete Canciones populares españolas*  
**Granados** *Canciones amatorias. Goyescas – La maja y el ruiseñor* **Turina** *Tres Arias, Op 26*  
**Danielle Talamantes** *sop* **Henry Dehlinger** *pf*  
 MSR Classics © MS1476 (51' • DDD • T/T)



Young American soprano Danielle Talamantes's seductive recital of Spanish songs

and arias stands out from the crowd for Henry Dehlinger's exquisite piano-playing, the opportunity to hear Joaquín Turina's *Tres Arias*, Op 26, and the gorgeous MSR Classics recording.

This combination comes together most persuasively in Falla's *Siete Canciones populares españolas*; Talamantes shines radiantly as if the composer had been writing specifically for her voice, and Dehlinger's vibrantly colourful palette instantaneously matches her emotions without ever obscuring her vocal beauty. When 'Nana' arrives, it immediately

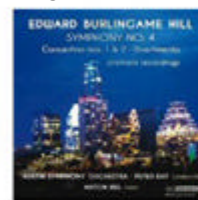
becomes one of those audiophile experiences in which every sound is captured in detail so naturally placed within its acoustic environment – in this case Vienna Presbyterian Church in Virginia near Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts – that it can serve as a touchstone for capturing musical excellence.

After the familiar Granados and Falla sets, which have become emblematic of a certain type of exotic Spanish musical panache, Turina's 13-minute set of three songs – composed in the same year that his opera *Jardín de oriente* opened in Madrid – introduces a more courtly but no less passionate attitude to love; in the opening, six-minute 'Romance', it magically transforms the formal heraldic gallantry of a Moorish knight into an intimate, ennobling song of love and death. Talamantes is superb in the fisherman's love song 'El pescador', and in 'Rima' revels in Turina's Technicolor exotic side.

There are good booklet-notes by William Craig Krause, and complete texts including excellent English translations by Dehlinger which particularly catch the rhythms of the poetry. **Laurence Vittes**

## EB Hill

**Concertinos**<sup>a</sup> – No 1, Op 36; No 2, Op 44.  
**Divertimento**<sup>a</sup>. Symphony No 4, Op 47  
<sup>a</sup>**Anton Nel** *pf*  
**Austin Symphony Orchestra / Peter Bay**  
 Bridge © BRIDGE9443 (61' • DDD)



Edward Burlingame Hill's vibrant and expressive Symphony No 4 lay on a shelf for

more than 70 years before the Austin Symphony Orchestra and Music Director Peter Bay gave its premiere in 2013. The ensemble's new disc contains the symphony and other appealing Hill works in their first recordings, prompting the question of why the composer's music has languished. Could it be that he was overshadowed by a number of his Harvard students, such as Bernstein, Thomson and Carter? Whatever the reason, Hill is neglected no more.

No one is going to claim Hill (1872-1960) as a composer of striking originality but everything on this disc is beautifully crafted and alive. The composer's studies with John Knowles Paine gave him important training in traditional musical

# NEW RELEASES FROM ECM



**Hilary Hahn:**  
**MOZART 5, VIEUXTEMPS 4**  
Hahn pairs two cornerstones of the violin repertoire: Mozart's Violin Concerto no. 5 & Vieuxtemps' Violin Concerto no. 4. She is joined by Paavo Järvi and The Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen. CGMH010002



**Ólafur Arnalds & Alice Sara Ott**  
**THE CHOPIN PROJECT**  
Award-winning young Icelandic pop/classical musician Ólafur Arnalds collaborates with pianist Alice Sara Ott & captures Chopin's works with a dream-like ambience while connecting each piece with his own compositions. CGMH010003



**Avi Avital:**  
**VIVALDI**  
The Grammy nominated mandolinist records an album of Vivaldi with the Venice Baroque Orchestra. In addition to the mandolin concerto, they record "Summer" from the *Four Seasons*. CGMH010004



**Keith Jarrett:**  
**SAMUEL BARBER / BÉLA BARTÓK**  
On these two classical concert recordings from 1984 and 1985 Jarrett rises to the challenge of these major works with vigorous, lyrical, strong performances. Improvised encore concludes program. CGMH010005

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elements before he ventured to Paris, where Widor guided his writing further in the direction of clarity and elegance. Hill's music sounds like an amalgam of these American and French influences without putting exclamation points on either style.

The Fourth Symphony (1940-41) contains three movements of concise and lyrical activity marked by bountiful rhythmic pep and sonorous textures. Hill rarely strays from tonal centres but his narratives unfold with persuasive sweep and logic. Invigorating spirit, wit and keyboard acrobatics, along with light sprinklings of jazz, are key ingredients in the Divertimento (1926) and Concertinos Nos 1 (1931) and 2 (1938-39).

The performances advocate brilliantly for Hill. Bay and his Austin players are crisp and warm in the symphony, and they collaborate with pinpoint vitality with pianist Anton Nel, who exudes virtuoso flair in his solo duties.

**Donald Rosenberg**

## Hodge

'Life is endless like our field of vision'  
Alêtheia<sup>a</sup>. Pools of shadow from an older sky<sup>b</sup>.  
Out of a Dark Sea<sup>c</sup>. re[(f)use]<sup>d</sup>

**Huck Hodge** <sup>bpf/bdelecs/melodica</sup>

<sup>d</sup>**Jack Quartet**; <sup>a</sup>**Talea Ensemble / Jim Baker**  
New World © NW80758-2 (68' • DDD)



In four works written since 2006, 38-year-old Huck Hodge from the 'junior professorial

ranks' at the University of Washington explores a series of unique but familial sonic spaces in which piano, winds, strings and digital technology in different configurations conjure up worlds of musical magic.

Five minutes into the purely instrumental *Alêtheia*, inspired by Parmenides, Heraclitus and Heidegger no less, the woodwinds begin making sounds like human voices; 15 minutes in, the music erupts into a chirping and singing, like a Central American aviary, one of Hodge's uses of lovely theatrical coups. *Out of a Dark Sea*, also for small mixed ensemble and suggested by the 'raw visual power' of a walk on a deserted Long Island beach in the dead of winter, alternates waves of texture and sound before resolving their differences at the end in a most diverting way. *Pools of shadow from an older sky*, composed in commemoration of

Galileo's telescope during Hodge's work at the American Academy in Rome, comprises five set pieces creating linked environments, segueing from one to the other with occasional light ecclesiastical overtones, and played by the composer with power and charisma. The CD concludes with *re[(f)use]*, in which Hodge, playing the melodica, combines with an amplified Jack Quartet to process in real time 'nominally ugly junk' from the concert hall, including Wi-Fi signals and cellphone ringtones, to probe and provoke boundary lines between music and noise.

Jonathan Bernard's booklet-notes provide absorbing academic road maps to what Huck Hodge had in mind.

**Laurence Vittes**

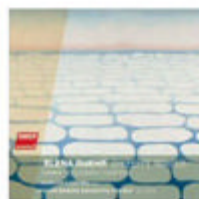
## Ruehr

**Cloud Atlas. O'Keeffe Images.**

**Shimmer. Vocalissimus**

**Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose**

BMOP/sound © 1039 (69' • DDD)



The title of the Boston Modern Orchestra Project's superb disc of music by Elena Ruehr

is 'O'Keeffe Images', which refers to her triptych of works inspired by paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. They are wondrous pieces, abounding in sonorous awe, grandeur and imagination, as befits the images that stimulated the American composer. A similar sense of urgent brilliance pervades the three Ruehr works preceding the O'Keeffe collection.

The disc's repertoire spans more than two decades of Ruehr's career, from her student days at the Juilliard School and the University of Michigan to more recent activities (she has served on the faculty at MIT for most of this period). These works reveal a composer who savours the large musical canvas and applies all manner of colourful melodic and harmonic dabs to create captivating soundscapes.

*O'Keeffe Images* comprises 'Summer Days' (2013), 'Sky Above Clouds' (1993) and 'Ladder to the Moon' (2003), which, played in that order, show how consistent Ruehr has been in developing a style in which energy, thematic generosity and textural luxuriance meld organically. The string orchestra in *Shimmer* (1995) does exactly that and more, using constant rhythmic motion and varied dynamics and motifs to evoke a luminous aura. *Vocalissimus*, inspired by Wallace Stevens's poem 'To the Roaring Wind',

soars on fanfare-like wings, while *Cloud Atlas* (evoking elements in David Mitchell's eponymous novel) sends a solo cello into rapturous orbit along with harp and strings.

Gil Rose conducts the BMOP in richly detailed and vivid performances. In *Cloud Atlas*, cellist Jennifer Kloetzel gives eloquent voice to the solo part. **Donald Rosenberg**

## Wold

**Certitude and Joy**

**Talya Patrick, Jo Vincent Parks, Laura Bohn, Erling Wold, Travis Rowland** *sgrs* **Bob Ernst** *narr*

**ZOFO Piano Duet / Bryan Nies**

MinMax © MM019 (62' • DDD)



In his new hour-long chamber opera *Certitude and Joy*, Erling Wold lays out

with minimalist means his own unsettling, ultimately terrifying issues about boundaries between the conflicting certainties of mathematical proofs and religious faith. His vehicle is a series of narrated songs and dialogues comparing the compact between Abraham and Isaac, and similar issues, to what Wold interprets as the extraordinary heroism of Lashaun Harris, who in 2005 threw her three young children into San Francisco Bay.

Based on the 2012 first performances, this recording is a brilliant *tour de force* triumph for soprano Laura Bohn as the heroine, a role that demands the tragic classicism and intense, focused range of a Callas playing Medea, and a warmth that enables Lashaun, despite her murderous act, to connect with the hearts of the audience. The supporting cast, meanwhile, act convincingly and sing simply. Within the sheer surrealistic horror of the story, with its virtually non-stop narrative underlying the nine scenes and 23 tracks, supported instrumentally only by the ZOFO Duet (pianists Keisuke Nakagoshi and Eva-Maria Zimmermann), Wold's music mostly plays an unassuming, pulsing role which is all the more effective when it occasionally takes an eloquently central role as an indicator of Lashaun's incongruous emotions.

Co-founder of the San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra, Wold fuels the theatrical pain of the story with a massive, detailed libretto of his own devising, dotted with cultural signposts like 'being on the razor's edge', under whose sails the story glides forwards to its terrible end.

**Laurence Vittes**

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Photo: J.D. Scott

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# THE SCENE

Christian Zacharias plays Schumann in Saint Paul, French actress Marion Cotillard appears in a New York production of Honegger's *Joan of Arc*, and MTT leads a Beethoven-fest in San Francisco

## SAINT PAUL, MN

### **Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra**

#### **Schumann: Piano Concerto (June 5-6)**

The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra closes its season with an intriguing and challenging programme. The SPCO's Artistic Partner Christian Zacharias leads as both conductor and pianist with Romantic and 20th-century works on the bill. Frank Martin's *Petite symphonie concertante*, one of very few works in the 20th-century chamber music repertoire to showcase the harpsichord, pays musical homage to Bach. Selections from Dvořák's *Legends* – originally conceived as a four-hand piano work but later orchestrated by the composer – follow. The concert comes to a close with Schumann's famous Piano Concerto in A minor with Zacharias as soloist.

[thespco.org](http://thespco.org)

## KANSAS CITY, MO

### **Kansas City Symphony**

#### **Hadelich plays Bruch (June 5-7)**

The Music Director of the Kansas City Symphony, Michael Stern, offers up an aching beautiful programme of works, opening with Wagner's Prelude and Liebestod from *Tristan und Isolde*. Bruch's beloved and Romantic Violin Concerto is performed by 31-year-old German Augustin Hadelich, who's renowned for his gorgeous tone and superb technique. This is followed by Schoenberg's chromatically alluring *Verklärte Nacht* for strings; the concert concludes with Ravel's Suite No 2 from *Daphnis et Chloé*.

[kcsymphony.org](http://kcsymphony.org)

## NEW YORK, NY

### **New York Philharmonic**

#### **Honegger: Joan of Arc (June 10-13)**

The New York Philharmonic gives the US premiere of a staged production of Honegger's *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, starring the Academy Award-winning French actress Marion Cotillard. Honegger's imposing oratorio, written in 1938, tells the life of the French martyr in a series of flashbacks. Honegger collaborated with the poet Paul Claudel to create this narrative, mixing spoken-word performance with a vibrant musical palette that draws on jazz and atonality, and featuring the ethereal sound of the ondes martenot in its orchestration. Originally created for the Festival Saito

## EVENT OF THE MONTH

Beethoven marathon: Michael Tilson Thomas



## SAN FRANCISCO, CA

### **San Francisco Symphony**

#### **Beethoven Festival (June 10-28)**

The SFS presents a three-week Beethoven Festival. Highlights include a semi-staged performance of the *Missa solemnis*, one of Beethoven's last and greatest works. The performance features soprano Joëlle Harvery, mezzo-sopranos Sasha Cooke and Tamara Mumford, tenor Brandon Jovanovich, and bass-baritone Shenyang. And for Beethoven fans with stamina, Michael Tilson Thomas and the orchestra attempt to recreate Beethoven's legendary 1808 marathon concert, in which his Symphonies Nos 5 and 6, Piano Concerto No 4, *Choral Fantasy* and Mass in C all received their premieres. Soloists include pianist Jonathan Biss and soprano Karita Mattila, who sings *Ah! perfido*.

[sfsymphony.org](http://sfsymphony.org)

Kinen Matsumoto in August 2012, the production is directed by Côme de Bellescize, with Alan Gilbert leading the orchestra. In addition to Cotillard as Joan, the cast includes Éric Génovèse as Brother Dominique and Christian Gonon as the Narrator.

[nyphil.org](http://nyphil.org)

## BALTIMORE, MD

### **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra**

#### **Bernstein: Candide (June 11-14)**

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra celebrates the end of its season with a production of Leonard Bernstein's comic operetta *Candide* – based on Voltaire's classic satirical tale of an optimist who is gradually disillusioned. This semi-staged production features a cast that draws from opera and the world of musical theatre. Keith Jameson sings the title-role, with Joshua Hopkins as Dr Pangloss, Marie Lenormand as Paquette and Lauren Snouffer as Cunegonde. Marin Alsop leads the BSO, with the Baltimore Choral Arts Society.

[bsomusic.org](http://bsomusic.org)

## SEATTLE, WA

### **Seattle Symphony**

#### **Brahms and Julian Anderson (June 11, 13, 14)**

This programme offers the US premiere of Julian Anderson's Violin Concerto, which was

co-commissioned by the Seattle Symphony. The work is intended to explore spatial relationships. Beginning off-stage, the soloist's physical location changes throughout the work, altering the dynamic between soloist, orchestra and conductor. The work was written especially for Carolin Widmann, who is the soloist here. The concert concludes with Brahms's First Symphony.

[seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)

## SAN FRANCISCO, CA

### **San Francisco Opera**

#### **Marco Tutino: Two Women (June 13-30)**

The SFO presents the world premiere of Marco Tutino's *Two Women*. The libretto is based on Albert Moravia's 1958 Italian novel *La ciociara*, which was soon adapted into a classic 1960 movie starring Sophia Loren. It's the story of a mother trying to protect her teenage daughter from the ravages of war. When the women are violated at the hands of soldiers, they slip into despair. The opera stars Anna Caterina Antonacci and Stephen Costello. Nicola Luisotti conducts what promises to be a lush and expressive score. This production is directed by Francesca Zambello.

[sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com)

**Previews by Damian Fowler**

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# Recordings remain vital to the future of music

If we, at *Gramophone*, tend to view the classical music world through the prism of recording, I would hope that's forgivable. For us, recordings are not a merely a 'record' of music-making. They offer advocacy of the new, an archive of the past, access to the unfamiliar (how vast the repertoire is!) – but most importantly of all a powerful artistic experience in their own right.

This month the Montreal Symphony under Kent Nagano announced a renewal of its links with Decca, and as *Gramophone* went to press it was also announced that fellow Universal stablemate DG had signed a deal with the Boston Symphony and Andris Nelsons. Each has its regional audiences – but as both are on the other side of the Atlantic to *Gramophone*'s office, I'm not part of them. They may tour too, perhaps passing near you once a year, if you're lucky. So it's through recordings that we build bonds with an orchestra – just as it's through recordings that I have a perception of what the Chicago Symphony sounded like in the days of Solti, or our American readers might of the Hallé under Sir Mark Elder today. Recordings are a significant part of the international reputation of both ensemble and era – something Karajan understood brilliantly at the Berlin Philharmonic. They change things, open doors, and open ears.

And if it's true of orchestras, it's even more true of composers. New music can struggle: to get a performance, to get a second performance, and even then to engage the audiences. Often it's a case of exposure, time, and repetition – a statement which holds true for many art forms. This is where



recording comes in, and it's a topic James McCarthy explores in depth in his fascinating report this month.

One of his conclusions is that streaming has radically altered things for composers – something it continues to do for music in general, offering both opportunity and uncertainty. This month, with much fanfare, Tidal added a further name to an arena in which the likes of Qobuz and Spotify offer streaming customers various packages and prices (or lack of), not to mention hundreds of thousands of albums – with Apple due to join them soon. Brilliant for listeners in their millions, though labels and artists will continue to debate the business aspect for a while yet.

Meanwhile, in complete contrast, a new app jointly produced by Universal Classics and Classic FM aims to add clarity to complexity, offering subscribers just one choice of recording per work, with mood-based playlists an important part of how the music is presented. Part streaming service, part radio station.

We don't know what the future of how we listen will be – and CD certainly isn't going anywhere yet. But never doubt recording *has* a future: all the above reveals a real appetite for it, and for further reassurance, read our interview with Paavo Järvi. Just listing his current projects takes up most of the first paragraph, and it's clear that for him recording is an integral part of his music-making. So whether Beethoven encapsulating the bond between Järvi and his Bremen players on RCA, or a premiere from a young composer championed by NMC, it's clear recordings have a vital place – however we end up hearing them.

[martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com](mailto:martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com)

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'I first discovered Sibelius's Fourth Symphony when I was a teenager, and it's a work that still holds me spellbound every

time I hear it,' says **ANDREW ACHENBACH** who, along with Guy Rickards, reconsiders Karajan's recording in this issue. 'Renewing acquaintance with Karajan's famous 1965 account was certainly a stimulating experience.'



'One of the great joys of writing about new music recording for this issue was having the opportunity to speak to John

Luther Adams,' says **JAMES MCCARTHY**. 'Having long admired the music of the "other" John Adams I was amused to learn that the two composers often exchange emails to share instances of being confused with their namesake.'



'Paavo Järvi still has a long way to go before he even approaches the recorded output of his father, Neeme,'

says *Gramophone* reviewer **GEOFFREY NORRIS**, who travelled to Frankfurt to interview him, 'but he is nevertheless one of our most active conductors in the studio. I was keen to find out how and why.'

*Gramophone*, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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**GRAMOPHONE** is published by MA Business & Leisure Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. [gramophone.co.uk](mailto:gramophone.co.uk) email [gramophone@markallengroup.com](mailto:gramophone@markallengroup.com) or [subscriptions@markallengroup.com](mailto:subscriptions@markallengroup.com) Volume 92 Number 1122

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UK subscription rate £60-£99.

Printed in England by Wyndeham Heron.

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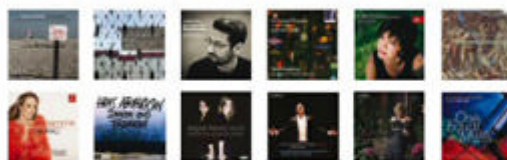
North American edition (ISSN 0017-310X): *Gramophone*, USPS 881080, is published monthly with an additional issue in September by MA Business and Leisure Limited, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business, c/o Worldnet Shipping Inc., 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11434, US Postmaster: Send address changes to *Gramophone*, Worldnet Shipping Inc. (see above). Subscription records are maintained at MA Business and Leisure Ltd, Jesses Farm, Snow Hill, Dinton, Wiltshire SP3 5HN, UK. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

## EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

## FOR THE RECORD

The latest classical music news



## Reviews

### RECORDING OF THE MONTH

The Pavel Haas Quartet's spectacular Smetana

### ORCHESTRAL

Brahms Serenades from Chailly; Vasily Petrenko's Elgar; Andrew Davis and the Melbourne Symphony tackle Ives; Jansons's Bruckner

### CHAMBER

Contemporary British works from the Gould Piano Trio; Handel gets the Red Priest treatment; Hamelin and the Takács Quartet in Shostakovich

### INSTRUMENTAL

Beethoven sonatas from Biss and Pienaar; Leon McCawley's Rachmaninov Preludes; 'Satie Slowly' from Philip Corner; Widor's Organ Symphonies

### VOCAL

The Sixteen's 'Flight of Angels'; Iestyn Davies at the Wigmore Hall; Rachmaninov from the Kansas and Phoenix Chorales; Carolyn Sampson's 'Fleurs'

### REISSUES

A new box of remastered Mercury Living Presence recordings from Universal

### OPERA

An impressive *Flying Dutchman* from Nelsons and the Concertgebouw; rare Strauss from CPO; recitals from Diana Damrau and Bryan Hymel

### REPLAY

Pianistic magic from Horowitz and Dohnányi; pioneering Bruckner; Fournier gems

### BOOKS

Guy Rickards on an exploration of music seen through CD cover designs; Peter Dickinson delves into a new Delius biography

### GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Fabrice Fitch listens to the available recordings of Byrd's Masses and recommends the one to buy

## Features

### RECORDING NEW MUSIC

James McCarthy speaks to John Luther Adams, Colin Matthews, Nicholas Collon and Robert Hurwitz about the power of recordings to liberate contemporary music from the concert hall

### INTERVIEW: PAAVO JÄRVI

One of the busiest recording conductors speaks to Geoffrey Norris about how to form fruitful relationships with orchestras around the world

### HANDEL AND MILTON

David Vickers and Paul McCreesh discuss a new recording of Handel's *L'Allegro*, which seeks to reconstruct the composer's original intentions

### THE MUSICIAN & THE SCORE

Pianist Barry Douglas and Jeremy Nicholas probe the score of Brahms's First Piano Sonata

### ICONS

Pioneer of historically-informed performance Robert Thurston Dart left a highly influential legacy of recordings, finds Edward Breen

### CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

Philip Clark profiles the inimitable Italian experimentalist Salvatore Sciarrino

### CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

Karajan's recording of Sibelius's Fourth Symphony comes up for re-examination

### THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE

Geraint Lewis offers a guide to 10 of the best Welsh orchestral works

### PLAYLISTS

Benjamin Grosvenor's tribute to the golden age of pianism; animals in music; rustling into spring

### PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

The best classical music concerts worldwide

### HIGH FIDELITY

Reviews of the new Arcam A49 amplifier and Musical Fidelity's MF-200 headphones

### LETTERS & OBITUARIES

### NEW RELEASES

### REVIEWS INDEX

### MY MUSIC

The Controller of BBC Radio 3, Alan Davey, on his passion for Scandinavian music



## NEW RELEASES



**Pavel Haas Quartet**  
**Bedřich Smetana**  
String Quartets No. 1  
"From My Life" & No. 2

*Pavel Haas Quartet represents the best qualities of the Czech tradition – warmth, sonorousness, individuality, intensity.*  
Gramophone



**Dvořák – Suk – Janáček**  
Violin Concertos  
**Josef Špaček** violin  
Czech Philharmonic  
Jiří Bělohlávek

*With pure tone and a gutsy lower register, the coolly contained Špaček combined fluent technique with expressive finesse...*  
The Guardian



**Sinful Women**  
Strauss – Wagner –  
Saint-Saëns –  
Massenet et al.  
**Dagmar Pecková**  
mezzo-soprano  
Slovak Philharmonic  
Aleksandar Marković

*Love, sin and forgiveness. An insight into the mysterious female soul.*

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## MUSIC FROM AROUND THE WORLD ON GRAMOPHONE'S LABEL OF THE YEAR



# DELPHIAN



DCD34147

**Romaria: choral music from Brazil**  
Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge /  
Geoffrey Webber

'Romaria', a word suggesting pilgrimage, crowds, and processions, evokes much of what is special and distinctive about modern Brazil – its mix of people, its extraordinary vibrancy, its faith. This survey of modern Brazilian choral music reflects all of these qualities, as well as the natural wonders of this amazing land. Geoffrey Webber and his ever-adventurous choir sing both sacred and secular works dating from the 1950s through to the present, in a programme developed in conjunction with experts from the University of São Paulo's music department. This collaboration also led to the reconstruction of the rainforest soundtrack that originally accompanied Henrique de Curitiba's inventive and unusual piece *Metaphors*.

*New in May 2015*



DCD34153

**Luminate: Live Music Now Scotland celebrates 30 years**  
Spencer-Strachan Duo, Astrid Quartet, Laura Margaret Smith, Emma Versteeg et al

This year, Live Music Now Scotland – an organisation that promotes the work of stellar young artists – celebrates its 30th birthday. A blazing trail of commissions has followed in the charity's wake. In recognition of these three decades' achievements, Delphian has taken a snapshot of LMN's activity, itself a miniature picture of the wider cultural endeavours taking place in Scotland. Some of Scotland's shining young artists have recorded recent commissions by some of the country's brightest composing voices. World premiere recordings of works by Eddie McGuire, Alasdair Nicolson, William Sweeney, John Maxwell Geddes, and of a partly improvised suite by folk/classical trio Wildings.

*New in April 2015*



DCD34148

**William Faulkes: an Edwardian concert with England's organ composer**  
Duncan Ferguson  
The Willis/Harrison organ of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh

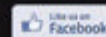
William Faulkes (1863–1933), comfortably England's most prolific organ composer of all time, was one of the leading figures in a generation of organist-composers whose melodious, spirited, uplifting music, long out of fashion, is now seeing something of a resurgence. Having incited critical fervour with his choir's wide-ranging recordings of music from John Sheppard to Gabriel Jackson, Duncan Ferguson proves himself equally compelling as an advocate for Faulkes, revelling in music that speaks from and of the golden age of organ concert-going.

'[Faulkes] could have wished for no more persuasive an advocate than Duncan Ferguson, nor a finer instrument than this glorious – and historically correct – "Father" Willis'  
— Gramophone, March 2015

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# GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

**Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews**



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



**SMETANA**  
String Quartets  
Pavel Haas Quartet  
Supraphon ©  
SU4172-2  
► **HARRIET SMITH'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 24**

When an ensemble receives Editor's Choices (not to mention Gramophone Awards) disc after disc, you know you're in the presence of a very fine group of musicians: gripping, searing playing defines this exceptional release.



**CPE BACH** Symphonies  
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment / Rebecca Miller  
Signum © SIGCD395  
Last year's anniversary

led many to explore CPE Bach's music more widely – and this hugely enjoyable release is a highly recommended way to continue such a journey!

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 26**



**MacMILLAN. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**  
Oboe Concertos  
Nicholas Daniel *ob*  
Britten Sinfonia / James MacMillan

Harmonia Mundi © HMU80 7573  
Nicholas Daniel won the BBC Young Musician Award with the RVW work 35 years ago: it clearly resonates with him still.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 28**



**WALTON** Symphony No. 2. Cello Concerto  
Paul Watkins *vc* BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner  
Chandos ©

CHSA5153  
Edward Gardner follows his Recording of the Month-winning Walton First Symphony with a superb Second.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**



**GRIEG. GRAINGER. NIELSEN** Works for Cello and Piano  
Andreas Brantelid *vc*  
Christian Ihle Hadland *pf*  
BIS © BIS2120

Wonderfully-played Nordic, or Nordic-inspired, music from a Swedish-Danish cellist and Norwegian pianist. Recorded in Suffolk.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 46**



**SCHUBERT**  
Piano Sonata No. 18. Hungarian Melody. Allegro, 'Lebensstürme'  
David Fray, Jacques Rouvier *pf*

Erato © 2564 61669-9  
Expertly controlled and thoughtfully interpreted Schubert from this ever-impressive young French pianist.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**



**MARENZIO** Quinto libro de madrigali a sei voci  
Elena Biscuola *mez*  
La Compagnia del Madrigale  
Glossa © GCD922804

Last year's Early Music Award-winners return with more Marenzio madrigals – this new volume demonstrates precision, liveliness and remarkable rapport.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



**'FLEURS'**  
Carolyn Sampson *sop*  
Joseph Middleton *pf*  
BIS © BIS2102  
It's quite remarkable to realise that this

is Carolyn Sampson's first recital disc with piano, such a firm fixture she is in these pages: well chosen repertoire, sung delightfully, as you'd expect.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



**'IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'**  
Contrapunctus / Owen Rees  
Signum © SIGCD408  
Their debut was

shortlisted in last year's Awards – their second release is just as accomplished; each of these powerfully contemplative works beautifully shaped and sung.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



**WAGNER**  
Der fliegende Holländer  
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Andris Nelsons  
RCO Live © RCO14004

Andris Nelsons is really one of his generation's standout stars – his interpretation here every bit as considered as that of his fine singers.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



**DVD/BLU-RAY**  
**MOZART** Die Zauberflöte  
Sols; Chorus of Dutch National Opera  
Netherlands Chamber Orchestra / Marc Albrecht  
Opus Arte © DVD OA1122D; © OABD7133D  
A 'people's Magic Flute' is how critic Mike Ashman describes this finely performed take on Mozart's opera.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



**REISSUE/ARCHIVE**  
**'HOROWITZ PLAYS SCRIBIN'**  
Vladimir Horowitz *pf*  
Sony © 88875 03837-2  
In Scriabin year,

an excellent exploration of the eccentric composer by a master pianist of the past.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

# FOR THE RECORD



Kent Nagano will direct the Montreal Symphony Orchestra's new Decca recordings

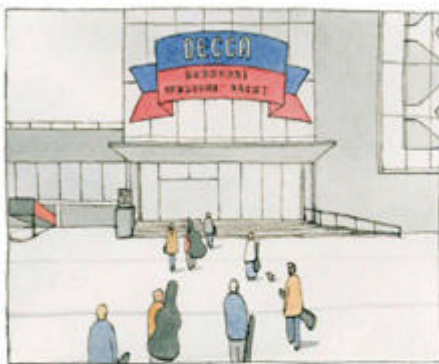
## The Montreal Symphony Orchestra reignites its relationship with Decca

**T**he Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, OSM) has signed a five-year contract with Decca Classics, renewing a relationship that dates back three decades. Under the terms of the new arrangement, the OSM and its Music Director Kent Nagano will record two albums this year. Last month they recorded *L'Aiglon: Son of Napoleon*, an operetta with music by Jacques Ibert and Arthur Honegger, based on a play by Edmond Rostand that tells the story of Napoleon's son who was known as L'Aiglon (the eagle).

In October they will record a programme with a Halloween theme: Ives's *Halloween*, Dvořák's *The Noonday Witch*, Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, Balakirev's *Tamara*, Saint-Saëns's *Danse macabre* and Mussorgsky's *Night on the Bare Mountain*.

Nagano, commenting on the renewed relationship with Decca,

said: 'We at the OSM are delighted to reunite with our historic partner and look forward to the special artistic projects which will result of this collaboration.' Decca's Managing Director, Paul Moseley, said: 'It gives me great pleasure to see the return of the OSM to Decca, its recording home for so many years. Now in its magnificent new hall it is sounding back to its very best under the enterprising musical direction of Kent Nagano.'



## Thomas Dausgaard to be BBC Scottish Symphony chief

**T**he BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra has announced that Thomas Dausgaard will succeed Donald Runnicles as the ensemble's Chief Conductor, beginning in September 2016. Dausgaard will remain Chief Conductor of the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Principal Guest Conductor of the Seattle Symphony and

Honorary Conductor of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, which he led for eight years. Runnicles becomes Conductor Emeritus.

In the 150th anniversary of the births of the two great Nordic symphonists Carl Nielsen and Jean Sibelius, the BBC orchestras appear to be taking on an increasingly Nordic hue. Dausgaard will become the second Dane at the

## Simon Halsey awarded the Queen's Medal for Music

Choral director Simon Halsey has been awarded the Queen's Medal for Music 2014. Halsey has been the Chorus Director of the CBSO Choruses since 1983 and in 2012 became Choral Director of the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. He is also Principal Conductor of the Berlin Radio Choir and will become their Conductor Laureate this month.

Composer Judith Weir, who sat on the award's committee, said: 'Simon Halsey has made a fundamental contribution to European music through his championship of choral singing as a vital part of orchestral performance, a British tradition which stretches back several centuries...His lively, participatory style has inspired a new generation of young choral directors, together with a remarkable upsurge of interest in choirs and singing in the UK.'

## Dame Evelyn Glennie is Laureate for Polar Music Prize 2015

Dame Evelyn Glennie has been named a Laureate for the Polar Music Prize 2015. The Scottish percussionist, who has been deaf since the age of 12, will receive the prize money of one million Swedish kronor from King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden in Stockholm on June 9. The ceremony will be broadcast live on Swedish national television, and throughout Europe via TV4 Play.

The Polar Music Prize was established in 1989 by the late Stig Anderson who, as Abba's publisher, lyricist and manager, played a key role in the group's success. Without any restrictions on nationality, the prize is awarded, to one or more persons, for 'significant achievements in music'.

helm of a BBC orchestra, following the appointment of Thomas Søndergård at the BBC NOW in 2012. Come September 2016, all four BBC symphony orchestras will have Nordic conductors on their letterhead, as Finns Sakari Oramo and John Storgårds continue as Chief Conductor and Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC SO and BBC Philharmonic respectively.





Dame Evelyn Glennie: Polar Music Prize Laureate

Susan Daniels, CEO for the National Deaf Children's Society, paid tribute to the percussionist from Aberdeen, praising her for being 'an exceptional role model for deaf children and young people across the UK. This latest accolade is a very clear reminder that, given the right support and encouragement, deaf children can do anything they put their mind to.'

### Life after the cello: Julian Lloyd Webber goes to Birmingham

Julian Lloyd Webber has been appointed the new Principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire, succeeding David Saint. Lloyd Webber has been a prominent advocate for music education and has frequently appeared on radio and TV, and in print, as a spokesman for the cause.

The Conservatoire is currently building a new £46 million home in Birmingham's city centre. Commenting on the appointment, Lloyd Webber said: 'I am honoured and thrilled to be chosen as the new Principal of Birmingham Conservatoire. The state-of-the-art facilities being built within the campus will be second to none and superior to many, both throughout the UK and beyond. I am especially excited about the fantastic opportunities that will be on offer to our students.'

### Choir of Saint Thomas, New York, signs deal with Resonus Classics

The choir of Saint Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York has signed a recording contract with Resonus Classics. The 10-album deal will begin with a release of Bach's Motets in May, and plans for future releases include Rachmaninov's *Vespers*, Fauré's Requiem, Handel's *Messiah* and what Resonus Classics describes as 'lesser-known works that deserve to be heard'.

Saint Thomas is an Episcopalian church very much in the spirit of the Anglican choral tradition, with a choir of men and boys (the latter attending America's only church-related residential choir school) under the direction of organist John Scott. Scott took up the post of Director of Music following 14 years at London's St Paul's Cathedral, and among the planned Resonus recordings will be solo recitals of Scott playing the church's Taylor & Boody organ.

Of the choir's 2013 recording featuring the Requiems of Duruflé and Howells, *Gramophone's* Donald Rosenberg wrote: 'Each work is illuminated through exceptional purity of pitch, delicately nuanced phrasing and lucid articulation of texts. The warm and spacious acoustics of the Manhattan church help to heighten the music's sense of mystery and reverence.'

British-based Resonus Classics launched in 2011 as a download-only label with a strong focus on audio quality, though now also produces CDs as well as digital formats ranging from MP3 up to 24-bit studio quality. Choral and organ music has been a prominent – though far from exclusive – part of its catalogue.

## GRAMOPHONE *Online*

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit [gramophone.co.uk](http://gramophone.co.uk) for...

### PODCASTS

Soprano Carolyn Sampson (pictured) speaks to *Gramophone's* Editor-in-Chief James Jolly about her new album 'Fleurs' – her first recital disc of songs with piano – including works by Fauré, Schumann, Poulenc and Debussy with pianist Joseph Middleton.



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The Choir of Saint Thomas, New York, plan to shine a light on neglected repertoire for Resonus Classics

A photograph of a man with a beard, looking upwards with his hands raised in a gesture of awe or contemplation. He is positioned in the lower left, looking towards the upper right. The background is a dark space filled with vibrant blue and green light beams that create a sense of depth and wonder. The lighting is dramatic, with the man's face partially illuminated by a warm, golden light, contrasting with the cool tones of the background.

# SOUND WITHOUT BARRIERS:

Recording contemporary music

John Luther Adams, pictured here at his permanent installation, 'The Place Where You Go To Listen'



Recording has transformed the way new music reaches new listeners, and as **James McCarthy** discovers, the latest technology is offering composers more opportunities than ever before

ifty years ago, a young composer of promise would, if they were lucky, have a new work performed to an audience of a few hundred people, with the possibility that it might be repeated in the very dim future. Now we have Mr William Walton's *Façade* issued on reasonably priced records for anyone, five thousand miles from London, to hear. People can keep abreast of modern music as they never could before.' So wrote *The Gramophone's* Ernest Newman in September 1930, neatly summing up the profound effect that recordings have had on the lives of composers. In short, they have liberated music from the concert hall.

As recording technology evolved through the first half of the 20th century, composers started to benefit from having their music recorded by the larger record labels, and the most exalted composers were given the opportunity to preserve their own personal interpretations on disc, among them Elgar, Rachmaninov, Stravinsky and Copland. Later, as an increasing number of smaller, independent recording companies appeared, a wider range of composers began to be represented. Companies such as Nonesuch, NMC and ECM built their considerable reputations on their commitment to new music, and now there are many more labels – such as Cantaloupe, Mode, Erased Tapes and NonClassical – which have dedicated and substantial followings. Today, vastly improved 'home' recording technologies and new routes to market, such as SoundCloud, Bandcamp and YouTube, have made it possible for a composer to write and record a piece in a morning and have it available for people to stream or download by the afternoon. No longer do composers require the endorsement of a large corporation to get their music recorded and released as they did 50 years ago; as a result, the diversity and quality of the recordings that listeners have at their fingertips has never been greater.

Perhaps the most commercially successful contemporary music recording of the past year was John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean* on the boutique label Cantaloupe. According to Cantaloupe's

Label Manager Bill Murphy, sales of the recording in the US alone are nearing 10,000 units (CD and digital) since the album's release on September 30, 2014. To put that into perspective, for the core classical music market, selling more than 5000 physical copies of a CD is generally considered a significant success, especially for an independent label. The recording's cause was no doubt given a boost when *Become Ocean* won the Pulitzer Prize shortly before the album's release, but still, the recording's popularity is remarkable – particularly when you consider that it consists of a single track comprising 42 minutes of thoroughly modern orchestral music. Not exactly 'bite-size'.

As *Gramophone's* Pwyll ap Siôn wrote in his November 2014 review: 'If ever an orchestra sounded like an immense sonic object, slowly floating across a vast area, then this must be it.'

Adams is a modest and deeply thoughtful man; had he, I wondered, been prepared for the popularity of *Become Ocean*? 'It has taken me completely by surprise,' he told me on the phone from his home in New York. 'But you know, often the composer is the last person to know. I don't know what an audience is. I don't think about an audience when I'm doing my work. I just think about the music and what the music wants, and I try to do whatever the music wants of me.'

Has the commercial success of *Become Ocean* changed the way he perceives his own music? Adams was typically frank: 'I don't feel any change in my attitude towards my work or towards the listeners of my work. I'm truly delighted that this piece in particular seems to have found so many people who appear to be touched by it. Will that ever happen again? I don't know, and it's not really my concern. I think I'm just old enough to not let the success distract me. I don't mean to sound disingenuous; it's wonderful, but I don't think it's likely to fundamentally change what I do or how I work. But I may now be able to pick and choose my projects more carefully. I may be able to do



After the success of his Third Symphony recording, Górecki composed very little

a recording is undoubtedly something of a status symbol, although that phrase is a bit invidious.' So does he believe that a recording can establish or further a composer's career and help build a reputation? 'From the start, we wanted to feature new and upcoming composers. Our Debut Discs series was the first big step in this direction, although it seems strange to think of established composers like Richard Causton and Sam

things that would have been more difficult before.'

John Luther Adams has hit upon a fundamental point. A recording has the potential to change a composer's life in a more profound and dramatic way than a single live performance ever could. To find out more about the impact that a recording can have on a composer's career, I spoke to the composer and founder of NMC Recordings, Colin Matthews. NMC was established in 1989 as a charitable organisation with a mission to record music by British composers who would otherwise be unlikely to appear on disc (or cassette – NMC originally stood for New Music Cassettes).

Matthews is unequivocal: 'For an emerging composer,

Hayden, both in their 40s, as making a "debut". I'm sure this series has contributed significantly to raising their profiles, and given a boost to their careers.'

Robert Hurwitz, President of Nonesuch – a record label that has built its modern reputation on recordings of works by John (Coolidge) Adams, Steve Reich, Henryk Górecki and Philip Glass – was more reserved in his sense of the difference that a recording can make to a composer's prospects. For Hurwitz, everything stems from the music itself: 'The biggest impact comes from writing a great piece; a good recording of a great piece will have an impact on an emerging composer, but it's all about the music. A great piece without a recording will still have a bigger impact than a good piece with a recording.'

Interestingly, both Hurwitz and Matthews remarked upon the negative repercussions that



Colin Matthews in 1992; his NMC label has raised the profiles of many composers

*'For emerging composers, a recording can be a status symbol. Our Debut Discs have boosted their careers'* — Colin Matthews, NMC



a recording can have on a composer's career. Surely a recording can only be a good thing? Apparently not. Hurwitz recalled Nonesuch's recording of Górecki's Third Symphony; recorded in 1991 and produced by Colin Matthews, this is still the biggest-selling recording of contemporary classical music ever made with more than one million copies purchased: 'Our recording made Górecki more famous, and more affluent, but at the same time, after that success he did very little composing. It did not transform his career – in some ways it may have isolated him from the musical mainstream.'

Matthews adds a further note of caution: that a recording can actually supplant the need to perform the work live. 'With the music of older-generation composers, I sometimes have the feeling that recordings can be a bit counter-productive – the reaction of musicians may be, "Oh, it's been recorded so we don't need to perform it". This is frustrating. One of the things we aimed to do was to record pieces that, say, had a great reception at the Proms, but then seemed to disappear. Anthony Payne's *Times Arrow* and Hugh Wood's *Symphony* are good examples: wonderful pieces, but they haven't exactly entered the repertoire, in spite of – or perhaps because of? – the recordings.'

In spite of these potential drawbacks, recording remains absolutely central to the lives of many composers, and John Luther Adams is no exception: 'I prefer a recording session to a

*'Our recording made Górecki more famous, but it may have isolated him from the mainstream' – Robert Hurwitz, Nonesuch*

rehearsal; I prefer a mixing session to most performances,' he said of his hands-on approach. 'It's a funny thing, but perhaps part of it is that I feel I have something to do – I'm actually useful.' I wondered if the mixing and production of a recording was just an extension of his creative process, almost a re-composition of the live performance? 'You're consciously aware of creating this experience, this thing that is related to a live performance but that is something else in and of itself,' he said. 'Early on I made a conscious decision that I was going to commit myself to making recordings, that that was the single most important thing that I could do with my music. It is true that there are more live performances of my work now and I'm thrilled by that. But it's also true that most people hear my music through recordings.'

The silent partners in all of these conversations so far have been the performers. With such a large repertoire of masterpieces to choose from stretching back hundreds of years, why choose to record contemporary music? The conductor Nicholas Collon has made recordings for NMC and the Hallé's own label, and, with his own Aurora Orchestra, has quickly built an impressive reputation for programming contemporary works in concert alongside a wide range of music. Consequently, Aurora has a large following, and this popularity hasn't escaped the attention of Warner Classics, which last year signed Collon and Aurora for a three-album deal. I asked Collon how different it was to be recording for a major label, with its commercial pressures, as opposed to NMC. 'The whole purpose of a label like NMC is to produce discs of a wide range of composers who are writing magnificent music that otherwise might not be recorded,' he said, 'and that is unique, I think. Everything about NMC is done in a very positive way, to try to access as many people as possible, but it is a fairly small corner of the market. Regarding the more commercially minded labels, of course it's very hard to sell discs nowadays, so you have to keep that in mind.



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Embracing the new: Collon and his Aurora Orchestra performing 'How Pure the Sky' with accompanying visuals at LSO St Luke's

But I hope there's an acceptance not so much of "running after audiences" but of just creating interesting products; in time, this could revitalise a small portion of the recording industry.'

Nonesuch has produced dozens of contemporary music recordings which have been extremely successful, commercially. But if you are planning to record new music, can you allow the potential commercial viability of the project to influence the

*'Young listeners are voracious and omnivorous in their listening habits. I'm heartened by that' — John Luther Adams*

planning process? As Hurwitz told me, 'When it comes to modern music, commercial considerations have never been a factor. If there's something great in front of us, we've always found the way. There is no obligation for a company to record new music unless they care deeply about it. We recorded Reich, Glass, Górecki and Andriessen because I loved what they were doing.' Luckily for Hurwitz, it would seem that his taste in new music is shared by many thousands of people around the world.

But with vast improvements in home-recording technologies and the rapid growth of digital downloads and online streaming, are record labels still as important as they were 30 years ago? Colin Matthews believes labels still have a special allure for composers: 'Obviously there's a much greater potential now for disseminating and listening to music,' he said, 'but, as in the book world, where digital sales are currently in decline in relation to physical, there's still a good demand for the physical CD – although downloads are of vital importance to us as well.' He continued: 'I think a label does offer status and I imagine few composers would prefer only to be available in some online form or other.'

Of course, streaming can be just as useful to labels as to independent composers and artists when it comes to

circulating music. Hurwitz agrees, although the form of distribution doesn't interest him as much as the music itself: 'We get far more hung up these days on the selling and marketing than on the making of records,' he said, 'but you can go back 115 years to the beginnings of the record business and even then it could be boiled down to the same two things as it is today: finding the talent and making the record; and selling/marketing/distributing it. No one in the 1920s would have talked about the importance of the Sears catalogue or selling in furniture stores – these being two of the foremost ways records were sold in America back then – as being relevant to making records. Today we seem to be far more obsessed with all of the new distribution channels, rather than considering the more relevant question of

whether the person with the talent is creating the kind of music a record company would want to be associated with.'

It doesn't surprise me that someone who runs a successful record company would express this view, but there are nevertheless huge possibilities offered to all composers by current technology. For the many thousands of composers (myself included) who don't have ongoing relationships with record labels, YouTube, SoundCloud, Bandcamp and the like play a significant role in getting one's music noticed and heard – in finding an

audience. I've been fortunate to have the premiere performances of two of my oratorios recorded live at the Barbican in London, and these recordings (loaded up to SoundCloud) have been instrumental in spreading my music to listeners and potential future performers around the world, all without the involvement of a record label. Traditional recording companies are perfect for a small percentage of composers, but there is more music out there than can be catered for by these labels, and open-access platforms such as SoundCloud give this music an opportunity to be heard. The downside, of course, is that the composer needs to cover the costs of the recording itself. As a result, many contemporary music projects have been born through Kickstarter campaigns; recently, New York-based composer Missy Mazzoli raised \$6000 on Kickstarter to fund the recording of her 'Vespers for a New Dark Age' album. It is also important to note that composers can make their music available on iTunes, Amazon and any number of streaming services such as Spotify without the support of record labels. Which isn't to say that most composers wouldn't appreciate the support, guidance and marketing heft of a record label, but, on the other hand, it has finally become possible to do everything yourself – from writing and recording, to mastering and mixing,



to designing the packaging and ultimately distributing and promoting your recording.

Nicholas Collon's diverse programming with his Aurora Orchestra resonates perfectly with a generation of listeners who are discovering their music in the largely genre-free online environment. And it is interesting that this eclectic way of listening is being reflected in albums being produced for a major label, as though contemporary music recording has come full circle. As Collon told me, 'I personally love a really wide range of music, and that is the same for all of the musicians in Aurora. It is by its nature a young orchestra – we're all of a similar generation, and these are players who, perhaps unlike players from, say, two generations ago, have been brought up playing Baroque music in a period style, they've been brought up being able to play contemporary music, and they are well versed in other genres of music. People are versatile these days. And that shows in the programming of our concerts, which, I hope people appreciate.'

Aurora's Warner debut, 'Road Trip' (reviewed in the February issue of *Gramophone*), features John (Coolidge) Adams's *Chamber Symphony*, Copland's *Appalachian Spring* and Ives's 'The Housatonic at Stockbridge' (from *Three Places in New England*) alongside folksongs arranged by Nico Muhly; it works as a kind of narrative-driven concept album. As Collon said in reference to the Adams and Ives works, they are 'quite challenging pieces to put on a disc, and it's nice that there is stuff around them that will attract another audience – *Appalachian Spring* for example. So I think that, rather than ghettoising contemporary music into quite a challenging disc, we've created something that hopefully will surprise people when they listen to it.'

Presenting contemporary music in a richly varied programme in concert and on record resonates with the way listeners are tending increasingly to encounter new music online today. But, according to Hurwitz, a true love of contemporary music can only develop over a lifetime of dedicated listening. 'A single event, or a single piece, only cracks open the door,' he warned. 'Someone may bump into things that excite them – it could be a record or a show – but becoming the future audience for new music calls for a lifetime involvement, and takes a sustained interest.' He continued: "Art isn't easy" – a line from Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*: it was true in the era of Seurat and it is true today. Just because someone goes to a "club" or a composer uses "rock influences", that doesn't help create a permanent change in a listener's commitment to new music. It is only meaningful if the music touches the listener deeply and then they begin their own personal journey to find the music that will move them for a lifetime.'

But perhaps this isn't all that matters. Of course all composers want to find a devoted audience for their music, but surely the fact that new music is reaching new listeners – albeit transiently in some cases – is a positive thing? For John Luther Adams, the free-roaming way in which audiences are listening to recorded music today is a source of great encouragement for the future richness and diversity of contemporary music: 'Listeners are far more open-minded, far more curious, far more intelligent than we sometimes give them credit for,' he said. 'I think this is especially true of younger listeners, who are voracious and omnivorous in their listening habits. They don't really care what genre or style or name might be given to a piece of music. As Duke Ellington said, "If it sounds good, it is good". And I'm really heartened by that. With online streaming and online radio you're getting these often seamless but extremely variegated mixes of all styles of music and it is a wonderful thing. I celebrate it.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON WEIR



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# PAAVO JÄRVI: *A passion for recording*

Geoffrey Norris meets one of the most highly regarded and prolific recording artists of the 21st century whose recent musical explorations range from Mozart to Dutilleux

**B**eethoven and Schumann on RCA. Shostakovich on Erato and Pentatone. Mozart and Vieuxtemps on DG. Mahler on Unitel DVDs. Paavo Järvi's recent, current and imminent output of recordings is extensive

both in quantity and in breadth of repertoire. The range is even broader when you take into account the Orchestre de Paris' swiftly released recording of Järvi conducting the inaugural concert of the city's brand new concert hall, the Philharmonie, in January, and last year's all-Dutilleux CD of *Métaboles*, *Sur le même accord* and the First Symphony.

At a time when some other conductors seem to be focusing their recording activity on single-composer projects or on big landmark ventures, Järvi is bucking the trend in the catholicity of his tastes and the way in which he views recording as an integral part of his daily musical life. He has a long way to go before catching up with his father, Neeme, who has made well over 400 recordings, and counting. But still he presents a fascinating figure, possessed both of vigour and of wide musical scope, and also with the gift of discernment. 'I don't make recordings just for the sake of it,' Järvi emphasises while we are having lunch in Frankfurt on the day after he has conducted the Radio Symphony Orchestra in Schumann's *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, Shostakovich's First Symphony and Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Nicholas Angelich, Gil Shaham and Anne Gastinel – the last of which was also being recorded for release on disc. There is, he stresses, a reason for everything he does.

One of the key factors behind his diversity of programming is that he is associated with so many different orchestras that have their own traditions, their own sounds, their own particular

strengths. With the music directorship of the Orchestre de Paris he combines the artistic directorship of the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie in Bremen; from this autumn he will also be Chief Conductor of the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo. Added to that, he is Conductor Laureate of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, Music Director Laureate of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Artistic Advisor to the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra. Phew, you might say. But for Järvi there is a simple explanation. 'I am not a big fan of guest conducting,' he says, 'because I can't get the result that I want. When I show up some place for a week, it's not a relationship. It can be a lot of fun in some ways, but why would an orchestra – a really established orchestra with a good sound – change something for somebody who comes once every two years for a week? How deep can you really get into anything?'

He does guest-conduct, notably at the Berlin Philharmonic, the Berlin Staatskapelle and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, and he is also engaged at the moment in a Nielsen cycle with the Philharmonia in London.

But, again, these are orchestras he knows, and they are orchestras that know him.

The word that crops up most frequently in our chat is 'understanding'. The important thing for him is the artistic understanding he has forged with the orchestras he conducts on a regular basis. Since we are in Frankfurt, he cites the Radio Symphony Orchestra as an example. His tenure as Principal Conductor ended last year, but when he returns, as he says, 'it's as if I never left. We have done complete Mahler cycles, complete Bruckner cycles, complete Nielsen cycles. We have toured together.' So far as discs are concerned, Frankfurt is also in an advantageous position in that all the concerts by the Radio Symphony Orchestra are recorded as a matter of course, as part of its mandate. The Alte Oper where its concerts take place is fully geared up technologically. During rehearsals for the Beethoven Triple Concerto there was some discussion about

*'It's important to be useful to an orchestra. If I'm going to be Music Director and it's not interesting, why show up?'* – Paavo Järvi



the positioning of the soloists to achieve optimum balance and projection for the evening's performance. From the audience's perspective, Gil Shaham was reckoned to be too far back and partially eclipsed by the other two soloists. 'But it's fine for the microphones,' said the technician in charge of the recording.

As for the Mahler DVD series, Järvi explains that 'the Frankfurt orchestra always opens the Rheingau Music Festival, and it's always televised. So I thought that if we already have the TV there for the opening concert, we might as well try to get them there for two concerts [to allow for any necessary editing]. I made a deliberate strategy that every year we were going to do a Mahler symphony,' the result being the DVD cycle recorded at the Alte Oper, the Eberbach Monastery and the Wiesbaden Kurhaus. As Järvi says, 'I was Music Director of this orchestra, and I contributed something. I have something to look back on. The recording media can travel to places where we can't. These CDs and DVDs are sold, promoted and reviewed in places we shall never go to. For an orchestra it's like a calling card – and very important. For me, it's important to be useful to an orchestra. If I'm going to be Music Director and it's not interesting, why show up?'

One thing that becomes apparent when you analyse Järvi's associations with various orchestras is that he does not carry the same works around with him but makes clear differentiations. Frankfurt, for the most part, equals the German repertoire. In Paris he concentrates on French music, 'very deliberately, because that's an area I love but which I don't have

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIA BAIER



Unstoppable: Paavo Järvi is the Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris; together they performed at the inaugural concert of the Philharmonie de Paris this January

a chance really to get into elsewhere. In Paris we've already done Fauré, Bizet, Poulenc and Dutilleux,' and, as if to defy typecasting, there will soon be a coupling of Rachmaninov's Third Symphony and *Symphonic Dances*. 'I've also learned from them,' Järvi adds, 'how to conduct Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*. I recorded it in Cincinnati and have done it for 20 years, but it wasn't until I went to Paris that I appreciated the music's inner logic and how the orchestra can make magic of it. I should never have recorded it before.' Perhaps in due course he will record it again, this time in the Paris Philharmonie, about which Järvi is enthusiastic. 'I think the Philharmonie is one of the best modern halls I've been in. The acoustics are absolutely great, really exceptional. The hall looks big but there's an intimate feeling. I'm told by people listening that you can hear everything. It's a great success.'

In Bremen Järvi has finished his RCA Schumann series with the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, and is now tackling Brahms. 'Ten years ago,' he says, 'I wouldn't have touched a Brahms symphony – in concert, yes, but not for a recording. Now I feel as though I have the right partner. Our Brahms is going to be a result of our accumulated experiences. The orchestra now breathes together and has an entirely different mentality from the one I inherited. After Beethoven and Schumann, Brahms is now a natural development, part of an organic plan.' In Tokyo, meanwhile, three CDs of Richard Strauss are already projected. 'The Japanese have a strong connection with Strauss,' explains Järvi, 'because their history is connected mostly with German conductors – Joseph Rosenstock, Karajan, Sawallisch, Horst Stein, Günter Wand. In German music they really know what they are doing. They have a fantastic, powerful sound.'

Two of Järvi's major new releases, however, fall outside the context of his regular orchestras. In the current political climate of unease about Russia's expansionist intentions, the decision by an Estonian-born (if now American) conductor to make an Erato recording of three Shostakovich patriotic cantatas might seem provocative, and the enterprise was not without its snags.

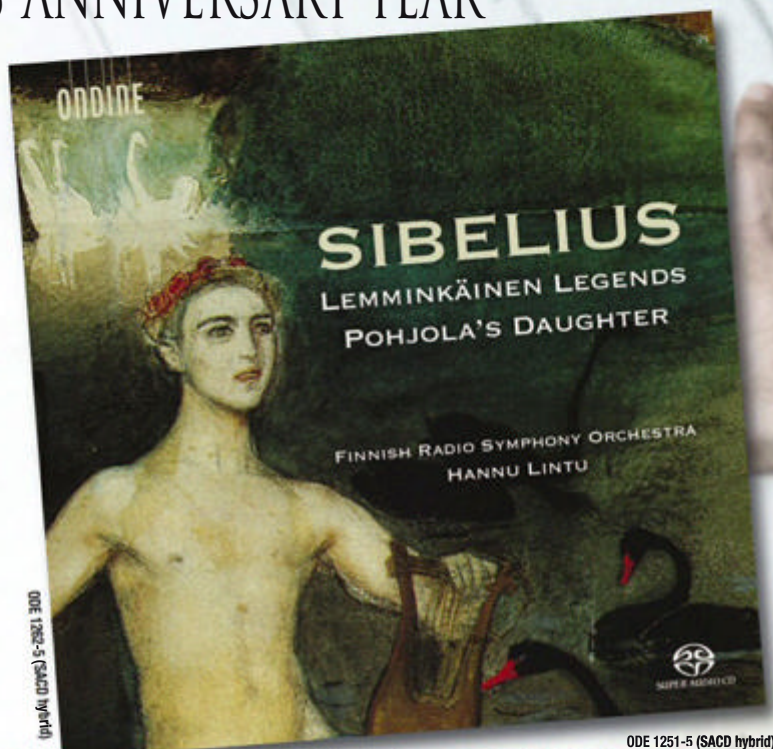
His use of Estonian children's and adult choirs together with the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra in works extolling the virtues of communism and Stalin did not meet with universal tolerance, especially as Järvi reports that Estonians are already storing up tinned food and other non-perishables against a possible Russian incursion. 'I had to go round with a bodyguard,' Järvi says, 'and to sign a paper saying that the choir wasn't inciting a revolution.' He refers to the works' musical interests as a reason for doing them, as well as the darker topicality of Russia's 'returning to the regimentation' that Shostakovich himself endured.

The cantata disc is counterbalanced by a Pentatone one of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, done purposely with the Russian National Orchestra because it is an ensemble that 'knows the political environment'. Järvi is also drawn emotionally to the Pentatone Shostakovich series because his godfather, Paavo Berglund, conducted the Eighth Symphony for it, and Yakov Kreizberg – 'a very dear friend' – recorded the coupling of the Fifth and Ninth. 'The Seventh Symphony,' says Järvi, 'is a sort of requiem, it's about the horrors of war, the concept of dictatorship and needless human suffering, loss and brutality. It's Shostakovich talking about his own country. He is also talking about his own country in the cantatas, but he is forced there to have a politically correct outlook.'

Even with the 70-plus discs that Järvi has already released, the list of things he still wants to do is prodigious. 'I'm now 52,' he says. 'Maybe there will come a time when I won't feel like doing so much and so intensely. But at the moment I have the motivation and energy to do it. If I could magically take back some of things I did in my thirties and forties in terms of recording I would do so, because conducting is a profession where experience is important, and only now am I really starting to understand some things. I can't imagine how dreadful I must have been at the beginning. You don't become a conductor at 30. It's a real profession of the second half of your life.' **G**  
*Mabler's Third and Fourth Symphonies are reviewed on page 32; 'Live from the Philharmonie' is reviewed on page 40*



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# FINDING THE MUSIC IN MILTON

Handel used Milton's youthful poems to masterful effect in his ode *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*. By returning to the original version – never before recorded – Paul McCreesh and his Gabrieli musicians have revealed even more of Handel's genius, writes David Vickers

A long-overdue memorial to John Milton was eventually installed in Westminster Abbey in 1737, 63 years after the poet's death. By this time, Handel's topsy-turvy opera career in London had already placed him at the heart of intellectual, literary and artistic life in Britain. With the introduction of English oratorios and odes into his London opera seasons, he had already begun to take an active creative interest in employing the writings of English poets, not least in Dryden's ode *Alexander's Feast* (1736).

The start of Handel's musical connections to Milton's verses is documented in correspondence between three close friends of the composer: James Harris (in Salisbury), his cousin the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury (in London) and Charles Jennens (who had recently furnished Handel with the libretto for *Saul*). Their letters between November 1739 and January 1740 form a detailed chronicle of the collaborative process that led to Handel's Miltonic ode *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*.

The subject was proposed by Harris, who selected passages from Milton's youthful poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (c1631), which were designed originally as counterparts exploring the emotions



A Sunshine Holiday, c1816-20: one of William Blake's illustrations to John Milton's *L'Allegro*

of Mirth ('Allegro') and Melancholy ('Penseroso'). Over the next few weeks, Jennens and Handel further refashioned Milton's verses into a suitable libretto. In the process, they created a striking narrative of a seemingly irreconcilable disputation between the sparring opponents Mirth and Melancholy, thus transforming separate poems into a coherent dialogue. Milton never required a conclusion, but this was problematic for an entertainment at the theatre. After rejecting Handel's proposal to use Milton's *At a Solemn Musick*, Jennens created his own text, *Il Moderato*; the figures of Mirth and Melancholy are reconciled by the enlightened principle of moderation in all things.

In later years Handel never performed the work the same way twice. In most revivals he dropped *Il Moderato* and instead used

his setting of Dryden's *A Song for St Cecilia's Day*, and on some occasions he added new arias which disrupted the poetic discourse that had been created with such care. Consequently, most recordings add or subtract material on a whim, which means that the original 1740 first-performance version has never been recorded – until now.



With his Gabrieli Consort and Players, Paul McCreesh road-tested a reconstruction of Handel's original version in concerts before taking it into the studio, with the resulting CD about to be released on Winged Lion, a subsidiary label of Signum.

I'm meeting McCreesh at his Rutland home, just a few miles away from Exton Hall, where Handel provided music for a domestic performance of Milton's *Comus* when visiting the Gainsborough family in the summer of 1745. I've arrived on what happens to be Handel's 330th birthday, so it's the perfect place and occasion to celebrate his first Miltonic masterpiece.

It has been a long journey to complete this recording of *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, with concerts at London's St John's, Smith Square, and at the Beaune festival, and three batches of sessions in different venues. Last summer I attended sessions at St Silas the Martyr in Kentish Town, London, at which McCreesh was armed with different editions of the score, all placed on a little table at his side, while photocopies of different manuscript sources lay at the feet of Principal Cellist and musicologist Christopher Suckling. Everything seemed to go like clockwork – so why did the overall process seemingly end up being so complicated and piecemeal across two years?

McCreesh laughs. 'I was looking for a boy treble to sing the three mirthful soprano arias because I'm convinced this is the right sound – but I didn't want that cathedral choirboy sound. Someone tipped me the wink about Laurence Kilsby. Sure enough, I went to hear this boy and he had a full and gutsy voice, the kind of voice I'm sure that Handel would've wanted for these arias. The only

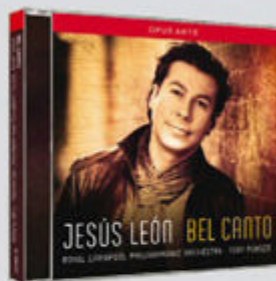
*'We try not to break the cardinal rule: don't go into the studio unless you've done a piece in concert several times already' – Paul McCreesh*

problem was that this lad was 15 at the time, which is about as late as it gets before puberty kicks in to spoil the best-laid plans. Three weeks before the concert at St John's, Smith Square, I said to everyone, "Look, we've got to record this boy now because the voice is not going to be around next year". So we reconvened at Henry Wood Hall, and got his stuff down before it was too late. Within weeks his voice started breaking!

Pragmatism in response to the needs of solo singers is something Handel would have recognised, but the third and final sessions at St Paul's Church, Deptford, involved technological wizardry beyond the composer's wildest dreams. As McCreesh declares candidly, 'I get so frustrated hearing recordings of Handel oratorios with piddly little chamber organs. For the choruses recorded at St Silas's we transported across the Handel House organ, but although we'd already used that for the *ad libitum* solos in "There let the pealing organ blow", I wanted to replace these with the magnificent large organ in Deptford, which dates from about 1745. I'm utterly shameless about being able to digitally manipulate the edits in order to get the right sound that I think the music needs.'

McCreesh's uncompromising desire to do full justice to Handel's Miltonic vision means he has left no stone unturned. It might seem like a challenge to record separately the disparate elements of the correct boy treble soloist and the best possible large Baroque organ in London, but McCreesh was determined to turn this into a cohesive performance: 'We try not to break the cardinal rule, which is: don't go into the studio unless you've done a piece in concert several times already. I wanted to do a few performances, let it settle for a bit, and then come back to it a year later. This is a much better

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Paul McCreesh and his Gabrieli musicians embarked on a two-year project of sessions and concerts to prepare for their recording of *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*

way of working because it allows me to get under the skin of the music.'

McCreesh and Suckling have also reintroduced two of Handel's contemporaneous Op 6 concerti grossi and an organ concerto (all recorded at Deptford last December). As McCreesh acknowledges, 'It's been known for donkey's years that almost all of the brand-new Op 6 concerti grossi were played between the parts of vocal pieces during Handel's 1740 season at Lincoln's Inn Fields, but there's nothing in the original manuscript scores that proves which concertos Handel used in *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*.' For the overture, McCreesh elected to use Op 6 No 1 in G ('it has a lot of mirth,' he suggests), and before Part 2 he inserted Op 6 No 3 in E minor (which 'contains a lot of Penseroso'). What started out as an experiment to recreate Handel's own tradition of performing concertos in his English oratorio-style theatre works turned out to be an exciting contribution to the artistic concept of the vocal work: 'It made so much sense structurally and in terms of the poetry that follows the concertos at the beginning of each part. The choice of organ concerto before Part 3 was a lot more straightforward because Op 7 No 1 in B flat ends in the same key as the beginning of *Il Moderato*. Then, when we put it all together, it worked brilliantly!'

One could make a strong case that *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* – especially in the clarity of its original form – is rare among Handel's works for potentially revealing every kind of emotional mood and pictorial colour that his genius is capable of. Indeed, the work was recognised for these qualities by Oxford professor William Hayes, who published an appraisal in the 1750s: 'There is not a Scene which MILTON describes... could possibly appear in more lively Colours... than our GREAT MUSICIAN has by his *picturesque* Arrangement of musical *Sounds*; with this Advantage, that his Pictures *speak*.'

There can be little wonder that in its wake Handel soon turned his thoughts to *Samson Agonistes* and a host of other Milton poems for the dramatic oratorio *Samson* (1743),

after which he was publicly fêted in Henry Roberts' engraving as the artistic heir to Milton's legacy – and yet we know that in 1744 and 1746 he declined suggestions from two different friends to compose an oratorio on *Paradise Lost*. It seems Handel didn't feel the excitement about their ideas that he had obviously experienced when composing *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*. McCreesh concurs: 'There are good reasons why *L'Allegro* is raved about by the Handelian critical fraternity. Its appeal isn't just the fantastic quality of the attractive music juxtaposing pastoralism and city life, crowds and solitude, curfew bells and rowdy merry-making. When you really dig under the skin of the piece, it is just as fantastic as the most iconic oratorios.'  *Paul McCreesh's Winged Lion recording of Handel's L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato is reviewed next issue*

## LISTENING TO HANDEL'S MILTON

Handel and Milton: their relationship explored on record



**L'Allegro,  
il Penseroso  
ed il Moderato**  
Sols; Cologne  
Chbr Ch; Collegium

Cartusianum / Peter Neumann  
Carus  ② CARUS83 395 (10/13)  
This masterpiece has been championed by many, with most including Handel's additions for the 1741 revival. This recording comes closest to capturing the relationship between Mirth and Melancholy. As for McCreesh's version, only time will tell if it becomes a new benchmark.



**Samson**  
Sols; The Sixteen;  
Symphony of  
Harmony & Invention  
/ Harry Christophers

Coro  ③ COR16008 (8/97<sup>®</sup>)  
In my view, there's no ideal all-round account of Handel's dramatic oratorio *Samson* that seems to get the pacing, characterisation and musical elements spot on, but this complete recording of the 1743 original version (other recordings are abridged) comes pretty close.

# GRAMOPHONE

## RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Harriet Smith welcomes the Pavel Haas Quartet's latest spectacular recording – the two autobiographical string quartets of their countryman Bedřich Smetana



### Smetana

String Quartets – No 1, 'From My Life'; No 2

Pavel Haas Quartet

Supraphon © SU4172-2 (48' • DDD)

This is becoming a bit of a habit. The Pavel Haas Quartet record a disc. Critics swoon and reach for their superlatives box, usually hidden away on a top shelf to avoid overindulgence. Result? It ends up as Disc of the Month and a hot contender for a *Gramophone* Award. But swooning is not enough, and nor are superlatives. So let's try and explore why this is so spectacularly good.

The PHQ already have an extraordinary track record with music of their Czech homeland (Dvořák, Janáček and of course Haas), so their Smetana was always going to be highly personal. Their sound is, as ever, immediately recognisable – partly due to the sheer richness of timbre but also the sense of four personalities at play. That is palpable from the opening viola solo of the First Quartet: here, Pavel Nikl revels in the juicy lower register of his instrument and the effect is markedly different from the Jerusalem Quartet's viola player – fine though he is – who is less lustrous-toned. In the answering phrases between the two violins what is striking is the level of detail combined with an apparent spontaneity. What this new version captures particularly compellingly is the sense of the music's extremes – at times it's hard to believe you are in the presence of only four players, so intense is the sound. No element is taken for granted, and the way they colour the dotted falling figure that dominates so much of the first movement is a masterclass in imagination yet never sounds in the least bit contrived.

Not everyone is going to agree about their approach to the polka-infused second movement. They are more galumphing than the Jerusalem, who cut a fine,



*'This is extraordinarily bold playing – they truly capture the sense that Smetana is writing symphonic quartet music'*

sophisticated dash and are slightly fleetier in the outer sections. On the other hand, the PHQ's viola brings off the *quasi tromba* marking very effectively (tr 2, 0'48"), while in the fairground-like Trio, the two violinists judge to a nicety the *crescendos* and *diminuendos* on their double-stopped chords in which Smetana conjures up a very lifelike squeezebox (sample from 1'46" onwards). In fact, so focused are they on the characterisation of this movement, injecting into the *più allegro* markings not just speed but an increase in intensity, that a moment of wayward tuning, just before the five-minute mark, is left uncorrected. Though initially disconcerted, I did find this became less of an issue on repeated listening.

The PHQ's inherently 'vocal' style gives the First Quartet's biographical elements a particularly poignant edge. This is especially effective in moments such as the cello soliloquy that opens the *Largo sostenuto*, which finds Peter Jarůšek voluptuously eloquent, his poignant phrases answered with equal intensity by leader

Veronika Jarůšková (tr 3, 0'50"). Here, the PHQ are several degrees warmer than the more forlorn Talich, whose reading prizes plangency over lyricism and whose every climax is almost painfully hard-won. In the finale, the Jerusalem find a thrilling drive, without making light of the more inward moments. Yet the PHQ are to my mind more compelling still, launching into it with a heady exultancy which makes the catastrophic moment where Smetana's deafness is announced by a piercing high E on the first violin (tr 4, 3'34") all the more searing – more shocking in impact than either the Jerusalem or even the Talich. Nothing can be the same after this; and in the closing minutes of the quartet they manage to convey a succession of emotions – warmth, doubt, determination and ultimately a quiet sense of resignation.

There is no shortage of exceptional readings of the First Quartet but Smetana's Second is another case entirely. It has never enjoyed the same success as the First, being dismissed (rather in the manner of Schumann's late music) as being the product of a deeply disturbed mind. But, as we've belatedly learnt with Schumann, disturbed does not preclude flashes of genius, which is surely the case here. Smetana wrote the Second Quartet just months before his death from syphilis and – while not wishing to draw oversimplistic parallels between life and work – anguish combines with an extraordinary intensity. It's easy to understand why it has perplexed listeners, especially after the First, with its generously signposted autobiographical elements, for here is a work that constantly shifts, eluding your grasp with its endlessly varying tempos and moods. In the wrong hands it can seem merely ungainly.

The PHQ understand absolutely the plasticity of Smetana's vision and convey it unerringly, unshrinkingly – and in some ways even more convincingly than the





Highly personal and spectacularly good Smetana: at times it's hard to believe you are in the presence of only four players, so intense is the sound

Talich, which is saying something. This is extraordinarily bold playing – and they truly capture the sense that Smetana is writing symphonic quartet music. The extremes are, again, tellingly conveyed. Take a passage such as the second movement (tr 6, 1'03") where, in contrast to the angry, angular octave writing, Smetana gives the viola a consoling melody against lolling muted violins (poetically marked *zephyroso*), conveyed with great immediacy here. And if you want to hear how powerful this group can sound, just sample the opening of the third movement (tr 7), which has an inexorable vehemence to it that is frankly terrifying. It gives the imitative writing that follows not only a heart-rending fragility but also an otherworldliness that seems to summon the spirit of Beethoven's late

quartets. And in the PHQ's hands, the dance of the finale, now affirmative, now hesitant, seems to pose as many questions as it answers. Is he going to snatch victory from darkness? For a time it seems as if it might be so; but the final repeated slashing chords (tr 8, 2'22") have an unmistakable air of desperation about them.

The recording captures the quartet as if they were in your living room and if anyone thinks that a disc of under 50 minutes is a bit mean these days, sample the music-making and you'll soon change your mind. This is the kind of disc that makes record reviewing the best job in the world. **G**

*Stg Qts* – selected comparison:

*Talich Qt (9/14) (LDV) LDV255*

*Stg Qt No 1* – selected comparison:

*Jerusalem Qt (3/14) (HARM) HMC90 2178*

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## Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

# Orchestral



## Rob Cowan on Bruckner's Sixth and Seventh live from Amsterdam:

*'The aura of organ music that greets the start of the Adagio finds its ideal instrument in the Concertgebouw strings'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 29**



## Edward Seckerson reviews Jurowski's Vaughan Williams:

*'Jurowski suggests parallels with The Bells in the tintinnabulations of the Eighth'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**

## Abrahamsen

'Zählen und Erzählen  
(Counting and Recounting)'

Four Pieces for Orchestra<sup>a</sup>.

Piano Concerto<sup>b</sup>. Ten Studies for Piano<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b,c</sup>Tamara Stefanovich pf<sup>a</sup>WDR Symphony

Orchestra, Cologne / Jonathan Stockhammer

Winter & Winter © 910 216-2 (50' • DDD)



Danish composer Hans Abrahamsen was always one of

Winter & Winter's prized house-composers, and this latest instalment in the label's Abrahamsen cycle borrows its title from another label

mainstay, Mauricio Kagel, whose children's piece *Zählen und Erzählen* plays with a cunning double meaning. When learning music, children are told they must count (*zählen*). And once musicians are able to *zählen*, the process of *erzählen* (recounting) can begin; instrumental technique as a route to unlocking memory and networks of musical association. To create his *Four Pieces for Orchestra* (2002-04) and Piano Concerto (1999-2000), Abrahamsen plundered his earlier *Ten Studies for Piano* (1983-98). But his new compositions aim to add up to more than transcriptions or orchestrations – they contain raw gestural and harmonic data which, now stretched and elaborated on the larger scale, can go forth and multiply.

But this is where the Abrahamsen project begins to fall down. The lingua franca ordinariness of the *Ten Studies* left me cold – who these days isn't borrowing from Debussy and Ligeti? Which means that he is already dealing with archetypes to which telescoping and adjusting scale can't add much that is meaningful. Transmuted from keyboard to orchestra, the *Studies* acquire a pronounced early-20th-century German accent as they mutate into Abrahamsen's *Four Pieces for Orchestra*. Timbres and textures are woven skilfully but the post-Bergian rhetoric feels overcooked.

The Piano Concerto, drawing on all stylistic points from a piano piece steeped in the mysteries of Schumann to 'Boogie-Woogie' from the *Ten Studies*, is in reality bothersomely prosaic. The performances feel spirited enough, while the Piano Concerto is marked as the first recording with added strings (Thomas Dausgaard leads an earlier performance on Dacapo). Which presumably means they counted – then had a recount. **Philip Clark**

## CPE Bach

Symphonies – Wq179 H654; Wq182/4 H660; Wq182/5 H661; Wq183/1 H663; Wq183/3 H665

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment /

Rebecca Miller

Signum © SIGCD395 (57' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, January 30, 2014



CPE Bach's two sets of 'Hamburg' symphonies from the 1770s have long been

famous for pushing the contemporary musical language to the brink. No other orchestral music of the period, not even Haydn's so-called *Sturm und Drang* symphonies, is so consistently disruptive. Bach's long-range control ensures that chaos is ultimately averted, but it's a close shave. The symphonies Bach composed two decades earlier in Berlin are far less familiar. Yet the E flat (Wq179), from 1757, is hardly less disturbingly outré than the Hamburg works. The *Prestissimo* first movement continually wrong-foots the listener with its manic outbursts and weird dislocations, while the contorted, chromatic *Larghetto* mines CPE's characteristic vein of brooding *Empfindsamkeit*. Only the exuberant 'hunting' finale suggests anything approaching stability.

*Galant* decorum simply won't do in CPE. Not that the OAE needed reminding in these vividly recorded performances from the Queen Elizabeth Hall. Under Rebecca

Miller's inspiring direction, the crack players tear into the fast movements with disciplined craziness. In the two Hamburg symphonies with wind (Wq183), the orchestra's tigerish attack and cumulative energy eclipse even the performances they recorded with Gustav Leonhardt in the 1990s (now on Warner Classics, 8/90). The players make you unusually aware of the tense contrapuntal friction between violins and basses, the latter both weighty and athletic. Horns glint and holler through the manic, seething *tutti*s; flutes and oboes proffer glimpses of precarious calm.

The two Hamburg string symphonies (Wq182) are just as exciting. Antiphonal violins spar edgily, offset by fleeting moments of yearning lyricism. I can't recall hearing such a viscerally thrilling performance of the finale of the B minor (No 5), with its firestorms and grinding, wailing suspensions. But these performances are not all about seismic shocks. Miller and the players think long, ratcheting up the tension towards Bach's cadences. And they are closely attuned to the dark, febrile beauty of the slow movements, whether in the long, singing lines, eloquently shaped, of the B minor Symphony's *Larghetto* or the shrouded viola-cello duet in the F major (Wq183/3). If you're still a CPE novice, I can't think of a better introduction to his brand of inspired eccentricity than these terrific, high-octane performances, live in every sense. **Richard Wigmore**

## Balada

Concerto for Three Cellos and Orchestra<sup>a</sup>.

Symphony No 6, 'Symphony of Sorrows'<sup>b</sup>.

Steel Symphony<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Hans-Jakob Eschenburg, <sup>a</sup>Michael Sanderling,

<sup>a</sup>Wolfgang Emanuel Schmidt vcs <sup>c</sup>Barcelona

Symphony Orchestra; <sup>b</sup>Galicia Symphony

Orchestra / <sup>b,c</sup>Jesús López-Cobos; <sup>a</sup>Berlin Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Eivind Gullberg Jensen

Naxos © 8 573298 (60' • DDD)

Recorded live at the <sup>a</sup>Philharmonie, Berlin,

October 28, 2007; <sup>c</sup>Auditori Hall, Barcelona,

February 14, 2010; <sup>b</sup>Palacio de la Opera, A Coruña,

Spain, November 23, 2012





The music of the Catalan-American composer Leonardo Balada has been well served by Naxos; this is the fifth recording of his work to appear on the label. His music's stylistic trajectory moved from neo-classicism to atonality (in the mid-1960s), and then, some 10 years later, without renouncing atonal thinking, he began to incorporate the folk styles of his and other countries into his music, aiming, it would seem, at a kind of historical and emotional depth that he felt had thus far eluded him.

The results are curious. While one is not deliberately bounced from one distorted world to another, there is a real sense of dislocation in the rapid changes of texture and harmonic style, to frequently bewildering effect – in fact, the composer describes his technique as 'surrealist transformation'. While this seems to me to defeat the expressed aim of lamentation in the Symphony No 6, it works to more impressive effect in the Concerto for three cellos, and Balada's evident mastery of orchestration plays no small role in this. Though I don't quite feel the triumph of the human spirit that the composer informs us is there, the three cellos with the orchestra produce some fascinating, magical sounds.

The *Steel Symphony* is the earliest work recorded here, from 1972, and is a homage to the steelworkers of the world, moving from the tuning of the orchestra to a sound world suggested by the machines and furnaces of the factories of Pittsburgh. It's a colourful, more straightforwardly 'avant-garde' work than the others. Performances are absolutely outstanding and beautifully recorded. **Ivan Moody**

## Barber · Britten

**Barber** Piano Concerto, Op 38<sup>a</sup>. Nocturne, Op 33  
**Britten** Piano Concerto, Op 13<sup>a</sup>. Night Piece (Notturmo)

Elizabeth Joy Roe *pf*

London Symphony Orchestra/ Emil Tabakov  
Decca © 478 8189DH (74' • DDD)



In many ways the Britten and Barber piano concertos make an attractive fit,

sharing a similar bittersweet lyricism, though Britten in the troubled 1930s invests his music with more of an edge than Barber in the nostalgic 1960s. Korean

pianist Elizabeth Joy Roe sets off into the Britten at quite a lick, getting the notes to sparkle. Her playing favours a consistently light touch and precision, while Emil Tabakov's conducting is founded on strong colours, abetted by some characterful playing from the LSO wind and brass. The result can feel uncomfortably like a meeting of opposites, with the pianist too mild against a bold accompaniment, but the performance has enough personality to hold one's attention.

The Barber Piano Concerto shares the same strengths and weaknesses. Elizabeth Joy Roe's pinpoint playing allows the elegiac slow movement to speak with a cool-headed intimacy but as soon as Barber's neo-romantic sails start to swell it is Tabakov's LSO, with its deep sonorities welling up from below, that takes the lead. The two solo piano fillers – Barber's *Nocturne (Homage to John Field)*, Op 33, and Britten's *Night Piece (Notturmo)* – make well-chosen encores, almost mirror images of each other. The composer's own recording of the Britten with Sviatoslav Richter remains self-recommending and the same might be said of either of the two recordings of the Barber by John Browning, the work's dedicatee. But, if this pairing fits, the disc deserves a qualified recommendation. **Richard Fairman**

*Barber Pf Conc – selected comparisons:*

*Browning, Cleveland Orch, Szell*

(7/65<sup>a</sup>, 2/98) (SONY) SMK89751

*Browning, St Louis SO, Slatkin*

(11/91<sup>a</sup>) (RCA) 74321 98704-2

*Britten Pf Conc – selected comparison:*

*Richter, ECO, Britten*

(8/71<sup>a</sup>, 10/89) (LOND) 417 308-2LM

## Bizet

Symphony, 'Roma'. Petite Suite, Op 22.

Esquisse: Les quatre coins. Marche funèbre.

Overtures – Patrie, Op 19; in A

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra /

Jean-Luc Tingaud

Naxos © 8 573344 (78' • DDD)



Jean-Luc Tingaud's generous Bizet selection kicks off with two rarities: both the imposing *Marche funèbre* in B minor from 1860–61 (a prelude to a lost opera) and the thoroughly engaging, at times decidedly Berliozian Overture in A (the composer's very first orchestral essay) are well worth hearing, and already show no mean skill as well as a pleasingly deft orchestral palette. Bizet began work on his four-movement symphony *Roma* in 1860, when he was

resident in Italy as the Prix de Rome winner, and tinkered with it until 1871. Commentators have tended to be a bit snuffy about this sunny confection, for which I've always had something of a soft spot ever since encountering Louis Frémaux's vibrant and outstandingly well-engineered CBSO recording (EMI, 1/75). Tingaud and his admirably eager and scrupulously prepared RTÉ forces do it proud, lavishing especially fetching treatment on the heavenly *Andante molto* third movement.

Elsewhere, the outer portions of the rousing 1873 overture *Patrie* may not quite have the strutting swagger or mischievous point of, say, Beecham's charismatic 1956 outing with the RPO but there's still plenty of spirit in evidence, and the two characteristically long-breathed tunes at its heart are moulded with genuine elegance and fragrant poetry. No grumbles, either, with the delectably unforced account of the *Petite Suite* that Bizet assembled from his *Jeux d'enfants* – and it's preceded by his orchestral reworking of 'Les quatre coins' (No 8 from the piano-duet original). Vividly realistic sound is the icing on the cake of another irresistible bargain from this stylish partnership. More please, Naxos! **Andrew Achenbach**

## Brahms

Serenades – No 1, Op 11; No 2, Op 16

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Riccardo Chailly

Decca © 478 6775DH (65' • DDD)



The swiftly pulsing violas and cellos that open Riccardo Chailly's Gewandhaus

Orchestra account of the First Serenade contradict what many past interpreters have presented as genial and easy-going. OK, look at the marking: *Allegro molto*. There's your answer. But does it feel right? To be truthful, at first I had my doubts. But, the more I returned to the performance, the more Chailly's method struck me as effective, just as Boult (Warner Classics) had done before him: in fact Sir Adrian's tempo for the first movement is slower than Chailly's by a mere 30 seconds. Both conductors observe the important exposition repeat. The main stumbling block, at least initially, was the *espressivo* second theme (1'37"), music that is just aching to be loved but that at Chailly's nifty tempo seems impatient. But, as Klemperer once said to Walter Legge regarding his slow tempo for the *Pastoral* Symphony's 'Peasant's Merrymaking', 'you'll get used to it'.

Maybe not quite the same in the case of the mellower Second Serenade (the one without violins), with its *Allegro moderato* first movement, where Boult's tempo is broader than Chailly's by almost two minutes and even Toscanini, in a sonically compromised but supremely lyrical NBC broadcast from 1942 (RCA), eases for an extra 1'20". That's where I think some might take issue, though in the context of an interesting booklet interview Chailly stresses the importance of Brahms's classical antecedents, hence the justification for brighter textures and swifter speeds. Point taken. Among the joys to behold elsewhere are the rollicking finales of both works, the Second Serenade's Rondo like an unacknowledged *Hungarian Dance*, where Chailly fractionally eases the pulse for the lovely oboe-led second subject. And the *Menuettos* I and II from the First Serenade, utterly entrancing, the second *Menuetto* a dead ringer for one of Brahms's Lieder, especially as played by the Gewandhaus strings.

As to rival versions: in the First Serenade, Abbado and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra (DG), and Stokowski with the Symphony of the Air (originally MCA Classics) are supremely stylish; and for the two Serenades together, I'd say István Kertész and the LSO (Decca), all bright and bushy-tailed, Dirk Joeres with the warm-textured Westdeutsche Sinfonia and Bernard Haitink with the RCO on especially glorious form (Philips), though neither Joeres nor Haitink play the First Serenade's important first-movement repeat. Chailly's superbly engineered coupling amounts to an essential refresher course, vital and instructive listening, though whether it'll alter your convictions remains to be seen and heard. It certainly did mine. **Rob Cowan**

*Serenades Nos 1 & 2 – selected comparisons:*

LSO, Kertész (5/68<sup>8</sup>, 2/69<sup>8</sup>) (DECC) 478 6420DC12 or (ELOQ) ELQ480 4839

LPO, Boult (2/79<sup>8</sup>, 11/12) (WARN) 635657-2

Westdeutsche Sinf, Joeres (5/93<sup>8</sup>) (ALTO) ALC1098

Concertgebouw Orch, Haitink (2/78<sup>8</sup>, 8/84<sup>8</sup>, 9/94) (PHIL) 442 068-2PB4 or 478 6360DB36

*Serenade No 1 – selected comparisons:*

Sym of the Air, Stokowski (2/80<sup>8</sup>) (DG) 477 6502GOM2  
Mahler CO, Abbado (7/07) (DG) 476 5786GH or 479 3192GB5

*Serenade No 2 – selected comparison:*

NBC SO, Toscanini (11/92<sup>8</sup>) (RCA) 88697 91631-2

## Britten · MacMillan · Vaughan Williams

Britten Suite on English Folk Tunes, 'A Time There Was', Op 90<sup>a</sup> MacMillan One<sup>b</sup>. Oboe Concerto<sup>c</sup> Vaughan Williams Oboe Concerto<sup>d</sup> Nicholas Daniel<sup>cd</sup> ob<sup>a</sup> cor anglais<sup>d</sup> cond

Britten Sinfonia / abc James MacMillan

Harmonia Mundi (F) (S) HMU80 7573  
(65' • DDD/DSD)



The Britten Sinfonia's latest offering launches with a deeply understanding

performance of Vaughan Williams's Oboe Concerto from Nicholas Daniel. It was with this very work that he first made his mark as winner of the 1980 BBC Young Musician of Year competition and, to judge from the present display, it's a piece that still means a very great deal to him. Not only do his flawless discipline, liquid tone, exquisite chiaroscuro and seemingly superhuman breath control ravish the ear, he also encourages his colleagues to give of their polished and raptly committed best. Time really does seem to stand still as the evening hush descends towards the end of first movement; and when the pace slows to *Lento* for the work's final full flowering at eight after fig V (or 7'01"), it distils an unforgettable sense of blissful wonder here.

Daniel proves just as convincing an advocate of the 24-minute concerto that James MacMillan fashioned for him in 2010. At its core is a substantial reworking of an earlier piece for solo oboe entitled *In angustii* ('In Distress'), penned as a cathartic response to the horrific events of 9/11, and whose raw emotion and sorrowful anguish throw into bolder relief the motoric rhythms and feisty humour of the shorter movements. It's a strongly communicative, sincere work that continues to lure me back, and Daniel's contribution is past praise in its virtuosity and eloquence. MacMillan himself partners with sympathy and also secures finely chiselled accounts of his own pithy *One* for chamber orchestra (2012) as well as Britten's haunted and haunting 1974 *Suite on English Folk Tunes* – the latter both more sharply focused and, in the valedictory 'Lord Melbourne', daringly spacious than either Rattle's CBSO or Bedford's Northern Sinfonia versions (EMI, 6/86; Naxos 12/98). Excellent sound and truthful balance throughout: this anthology merits a strong recommendation. **Andrew Achenbach**

## Bruckner

Symphony No 4, 'Romantic'

(1878/80 version, ed Nowak)

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra /

Manfred Honeck

Reference Recordings (F) (S) FR713SACD

(66' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at Heinz Hall, December 6-8, 2013



Here is the standard version of the Fourth which Bruckner made

at his own urge after completing the Fifth and Sixth, played 'straight' in one sense, unmarked by either the cymbal-crash superventions of editors from the early years of the last century or the new gospels of conductors including Mario Venzago in our own time. In a forthright booklet essay Honeck explicitly aligns himself with a humane, undoctinaire performing tradition we used to call 'Romantic', like the symphony, exemplified (as he sees it) by Bruno Walter's 1960 recording, awarded the laurel crown by Richard Osborne in his Collection (4/07).

That there is no hubris to such a claim is to the great credit of the sleek, sweetly yielding strings of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and its characteristically full-throttle brass section, with playing that calls to mind the halcyon days of William Steinberg's directorship (1952-76) and fully justifies the sobriquet added by Bruckner himself. The birds over the medieval tower, the shining silver armour of the knight on his mission of purpose unspecified by the composer's programme-narrative, all spring from the page as readily as if they had been put there by Liszt or Tennyson.

But we're not in 1960 any more. The slow movement's richly harmonised second theme is laid on thick by Honeck, whereas Walter lets it grow from the first theme's distracted march, still punctuated by the march's dotted rhythms. The solemn but compacted chorale between second and third themes is stretched to occupy a grail-hall space of its own. The *legato* in flute and horn as they reflect on the violas' sad song is just a touch too smooth to retain the song's melodic inflections.

Other, more impulsive passages come off well: the coiled spring of the *Scherzo*'s horn-calls, racing into the foreground, the graded fanfares that greet the climax of the first movement's exposition, a sudden outbreak of Ländler-ish humour at 16'10" in the finale, amid a dialogue between wind and strings carefully balanced to anticipate the bare stretches of the Ninth. Sheer magnificence is never in question, and the editing of three concert performances has removed any ragged edges, audience noise and – which I regret – applause, but the art of continuity is more elusively encountered. Back to Walter. **Peter Quantrill**

*Selected comparisons:*

Columbia SO, Walter (7/62<sup>8</sup>) (SONY) 88765 48952-2

Basle SO, Venzago (11/11) (CPO) CPO777 615-2





Top marks: Hannu Lintu and the Tampere Philharmonic follow their Gramophone Award-nominated second Enescu disc with a third (review on page 31)

## Bruckner

Symphonies – No 6<sup>a</sup>; No 7 (both ed Nowak)<sup>b</sup>

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

RCO Live ② ② RCO14005 (116' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live <sup>a</sup>March 7-9, <sup>b</sup>December 23 & 25, 2012



Asked to nominate a single word that sums up Mariss Jansons's approach to these

particular Bruckner symphonies, it would be 'fluidity'. The opening of the Seventh is always an acid test, tracing the ebb and flow of the serene first subject up to the point where a curling *tremolando* marks its restatement by fuller forces. Aside from a shimmering *sforzando* at 1'37", the passage is seamless. The dancing episode for strings with woodwinds at fig E (5'23") finds Jansons more or less bang on target metronome-wise, the playing warmly affectionate, the genial mood a natural outgrowth of what had preceded it. The quiet, prayer-like core of the movement led by strings (cued by horns, then woodwinds and horns together) at 8'13", is superbly done. Thereafter, tempo relations are mostly convincing and the great, arching coda is supremely effective.

The aura of organ music that greets the start of the *Adagio* finds its ideal instrument in the massed Royal Concertgebouw strings, Jansons guiding the notes with easeful mastery. Once into his stride, he edges forwards without ceremony, the brass at the climax captured here with great amplitude and clarity. The *moderato* section (fig D, at 3'57" and fractionally faster than is asked for in the score) sounds a little hurried, whereas the main climax – complete, in the context of this 1954 Nowak edition, with timpani, cymbals and triangle – rings resplendent and the brass choir that follows in its wake is quite magnificent. As to the remaining two movements, I'd say the lyrically played Trio of the *Scherzo* is the highlight.

The Sixth is rather more problematic. I searched out a previous Concertgebouw issue of the same symphony under Eugen Jochum, a magnificent performance from November 1980 where the opening is truly *maestoso*. Jansons's tempo is significantly swifter (14'47" as opposed to Jochum's stately 17'34"). The mighty panorama at the first movement's centre (7'48") gains in forward momentum what it loses in spaciousness, not an especially beneficial trade-in, at least not in my view. To offset the rushed first movement Jansons

conducts an intense and beautifully played *Adagio*, its various episodes sensitively negotiated; then we're given a swift, dancing *Scherzo* and a dramatic finale.

As to rival digital versions, Michael Gielen and the SWR Symphony Orchestra (Hänsler) is strongly recommended and so is Stanisław Skrowaczewski and the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (Oehms), if you can find it away from his complete cycle, though that too is well worth acquiring. As to the Seventh, Jansons certainly holds his own; but if you find my comments on the Sixth worrying (why worry?), Janowski with the Suisse Romande Orchestra (Pentatone) is a much-underrated version and extremely well recorded to boot. **Rob Cowan**

*Sym No 6 – selected comparisons:*

SWR SO, Gielen (11/02) (HANS) CD93 058

Concertgebouw Orch, Jochum (6/09) (RCO) RCO08005

Saarbrücken RSO, Skrowaczewski (OEHM) OC215

*Sym no 7 – selected comparison:*

Suisse Romande Orch, Janowski

(9/11) (PENT) PTC5186 370

## Castelnuovo-Tedesco

Violin Concerto No 2, 'I profeti'. Concerto italiano

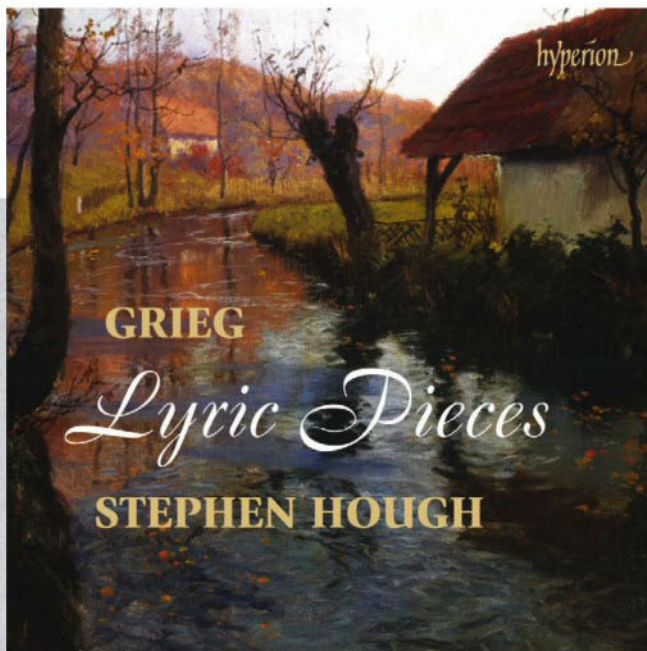
Tianwa Yang *vn* SWR Symphony Orchestra,

Baden-Baden and Freiburg / Pieter-Jelle de Boer

Naxos ② 8 573135 (62' • DDD)



# hyperion



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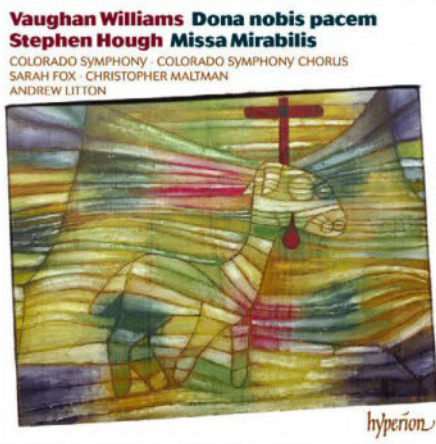
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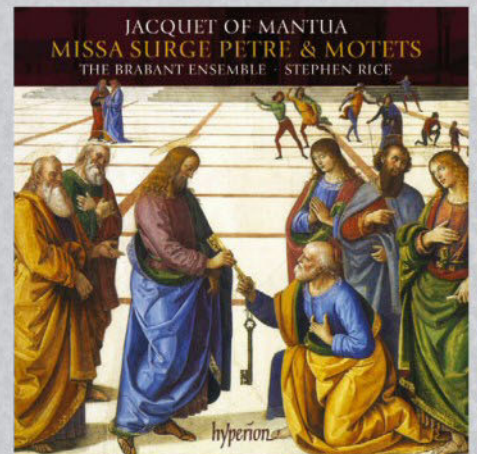
**Vaughan Williams:**  
**Dona nobis pacem**  
**Hough: Missa Mirabilis**  
COLORADO SYMPHONY  
ANDREW LITTON conductor



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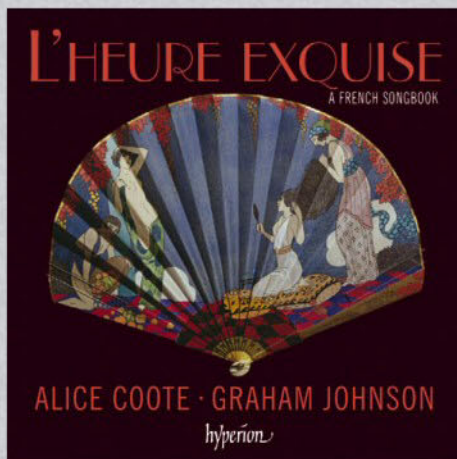
**Jacquet of Mantua:**  
**Missa Surge Petre & motets**  
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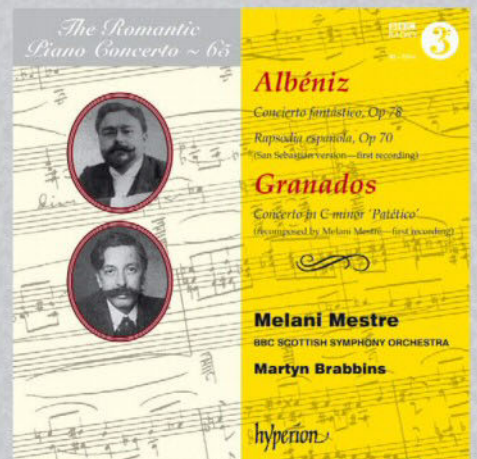
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GRAHAM JOHNSON piano



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BBC SCOTTISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
MARTYN BRABBINS conductor



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Tully Potter's booklet notes accurately set the scene as far as the composition of non-operatic music in 19th-century Italy was concerned; it was with Martucci that things began to change, and 20th-century composers such as Pizzetti, Respighi, Casella and Malipiero, figures whose music has once again earned a place in public awareness thanks largely to the efforts of Chandos and Naxos, were not merely accomplished but extraordinarily fine and frequently original composers.

The younger Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Ghedini have also been creeping back into the record catalogues. Castelnuovo-Tedesco has probably been held back, unjustly, by his association with the film industry. He was a prolific writer of film scores and, though his guitar music has always retained a foothold, it is only now that his orchestral and other music has once again begun to be performed and recorded. The *Concerto italiano* is not the breezy, pseudo-Vivaldian piece that its title might suggest; indeed, it is rather a melancholic work, even the lively finale (the best movement, I think) returning to meditative introspection before its final minute or so.

The Second Violin Concerto, *I profeti*, was written for Heifetz, at his request, after he had performed the *Concerto italiano*. Its movements were each dedicated to an Old Testament prophet, and it is imbued with the composer's awareness of his Jewish heritage and based on folk melodies, but it is no harbinger of gloom; it is in fact a rather more lively and colourful work than the First Concerto, especially the shining finale. Its glittering, singing lines certainly bring a resonant response from both soloist Tianwa Yang and the SWR Symphony Orchestra. It is definitely a work that needs to be brought back into the repertoire.

Ivan Moody

## Elgar

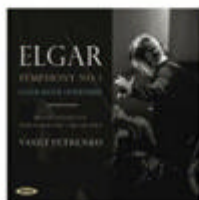
Symphony No 1, Op 55.

Cockaigne, 'In London Town', Op 40

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /

Vasily Petrenko

Onyx ® ONYX4145 (63' • DDD)



The nature of Elgar's musical language, with its elastic tempi and, as Parry once described,

expressive 'spasms', has often proved a graveyard for non-British conductors. On the whole Vasily Petrenko injects the two Elgar works on this recording with passion and energy, aided by some dynamic playing from the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and a bright, compelling recording quality from the engineers.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the shifting sands of the First Symphony's epic opening movement, with its extraordinary abundance (almost, one might say, overabundance) of thematic ideas, where Petrenko drives the music forwards with tremendous energy, yet, at the same time, leaving room for those characteristic delicate parenthetical moments in the development. The *Scherzo*, another movement super-saturated with thematic invention, has considerable élan, though perhaps towards the end, when the music breaks into reflective poetry, it seems a little hurried. Nevertheless, Petrenko judges the shape and tempo of the thematically related slow movement well, sympathetically negotiating the introspective last bars with some intensity and yearning. The *Allegro* of the finale is lively but not so much that it becomes incoherent (how I remember the scramble of Solti's interpretation), although, with the recapitulation of the motto march theme, it does seem a little bit too frenetic.

Petrenko's reading of *Cockaigne* leaves me with the same impression – perhaps a little too precipitous in the faster sections, yet showing an empathy with Elgar's more pensive side. **Jeremy Dibble**

## Enescu

Symphonie concertante, Op 8<sup>a</sup>.

Symphony No 1, Op 13

®Truls Mørk VC

Tampere Philharmonic Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

Ondine ® ODE1198-2 (54' • DDD)



There's something very 'pre-Shostakovich' about the austere chord that opens the 20-year-old Enescu's *Symphonie concertante*, but thereafter this lyrical outpouring from 1901 is entirely characteristic. The mostly slow first movement ends in a flurry of solo activity; the brief *Assez lent* that follows pushes the intensity levels up a notch or two, whereas the finale, like the first movement, is in essence an unstoppable flow of melodic invention. Truls Mørk is top dollar in all key respects, his phrase-shaping sensitively inflected (just try his first entry), and his

tone production as warm as anyone could wish for. A fair match, I'd say, for the equally excellent Alban Gerhardt, whose Hyperion recording (with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Carlos Kalmar) also programmes music by Dohnányi and d'Albert.

Enescu's First Symphony postdates the *Symphonie concertante* by four years and in terms of confidence and maturity marks a significant step forwards, from the assertive opening, through the expressive slow movement, to the finale, which opens very much in the manner of Brahms (*Haydn* Variations, Second Symphony). No need to sing the praises of Hannu Lintu and the Tampere Philharmonic in this repertoire. Their version of the Second Symphony (10/12 – coupled with the Chamber Symphony) earned itself a *Gramophone* Award nomination in 2013, whereas their coupling of the *Concert Overture* and Third Symphony (1/14) is consistent with its stablemates and scores top marks for both musical quality and technical excellence.

Lintu's performance of the three-movement First Symphony more or less matches Cristian Mandeal and the Bucharest Philharmonic (Arte Nova) for tempo in the first movement, whereas Mandeal chooses marginally broader speeds for the next two. I much prefer the better-focused Lintu. As to the same coupling featuring the George Enescu State Philharmonic and the Orchestra of the Romanian Radio and Television with cellist Valentin Arcu (Marco Polo), slower tempi all round dull the effect, not to mention less distinctive playing both from the soloist and the orchestras. So a definite thumbs-up for Mørk and Lintu.

Rob Cowan

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Arcu, George Enescu St PO, Romanian Rad & TV Orch,

Conti (MARC) 8 223141

Sym concertante – selected comparison:

Gerhardt, BBC Scottish SO, Kalmar (HYPE) CDA67544

Sym No 1 – selected comparison:

Bucharest PO, Mandeal (ARTN) 74321 37314-2

## Fagerlund

Violin Concerto, 'Darkness in Light'®. Ignite

®Pekka Kuusisto V71

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu

BIS ® BIS2093 (57' • DDD/DSD)



This is BIS's third disc devoted to the music of the Finn Sebastian Fagerlund (b1972). David Fanning was not wholly convinced by the earlier orchestral release

(including *Isola* and the Clarinet Concerto, 9/11) but I warmed rather more to the present pairing, in style not so dissimilar from his elder Swedish contemporary, B Tommy Andersson.

The Violin Concerto *Darkness in Light* (2012) was composed for and dedicated to Pekka Kuusisto, who gives a dazzlingly virtuoso account of it here. The three movements, as might be inferred from the title (derived from the writing of Haruki Murakami), explore and try to reconcile mutually exclusive elements, heard at the outset in the opposition of the dark writing for bass clarinets, timpani and tuba with the solo violin and supporting group of upper winds and bright percussion. Kuusisto navigates his way brilliantly through the gamut of effects including multiple-stopping, microtones, harmonics et al, all expressed within a broadly *legato* flow; even the more angular and hostile episodes serve to illuminate the music's broader context.

*Ignite* (2010) is similarly a work of dark and light, its structure dominated by spirals, the music calming to near stasis as it approaches the centre before being flung out again into the turbulent finale. It is an invigorating and virtuosically scored symphonic poem and finds Lintu and the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra fully on their mettle. Superb sound, as always from the black label. **Guy Rickards**

## Greenaway

'Aubade & Nocturne'

Aurora Musis Amica. The Blue Mountains. Poems I-III. Elk Branches. Stay Awhile. Dawn of Evening. Etude in F minor. Liena. Skylark. Fantasia - exc. The Feud Suite. Flywheel. At the Start of Day. Encore de lirico

Various artists

SG © S003G (61' • DDD)



The Australian composer, arranger and pianist Sally Greenaway works in

a multiplicity of styles and genres, from orchestral film and concert works to jazz, neo-Baroque and Latin-inflected big band, chamber and solo music, as well as vocal music. Some works are 'functional' in the best sense of the word; others are the result of Greenaway's own irrepressible creative urges. But, as can be heard on this generous selection of music from across her entire career (even her 'Op 1', written at the age of 14, is included), the unifying factor is a direct and highly attractive musical language that at times recalls that of other Australian composers, such as Sean

O'Boyle or Graeme Koehne, for whom communication is not a dirty word.

One of the most striking qualities of Greenaway's works for larger ensembles such as *Aurora Musis Amica* for winds, harp and percussion, *The Blue Mountains* or *Elk Branches* is that feeling for landscape which also characterises the music of Peter Sculthorpe or Nigel Westlake, the spacious scoring and meandering melodiousness contributing to a sense of sublime restfulness. By contrast, many of the chamber and solo instrumental pieces here, particularly *Dawn of Evening* and the Chopinesque Etude in F minor, have a nocturnal, improvisatory quality, an *Innigkeit*, which complements the mellifluous harmonies and delicate lyrics of a *cappella* vocal works such as *Stay Awhile*.

As beautifully performed by Greenaway herself and a host of other musicians as it is packaged, 'Aubade & Nocturne' is easy listening at its best and most subtly challenging. **William Yeoman**

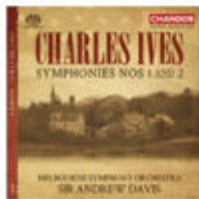
## Ives

Symphonies - No 1; No 2

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra /

Sir Andrew Davis

Chandos © CHSA5152 (77' • DDD/DSD)



There are masses of CDs covering all four Ives symphonies and plenty of LPs before that. For the Second Symphony we can go back to that exhilarating premiere in 1951, nearly 50 years after Ives wrote it, when Bernstein memorably claimed Ives as 'our Mark Twain, Emerson and Lincoln all rolled into one'. The sound quality of that recording (Sony, 9/74) is understandably a hindrance and the critical edition of the score came later with Kenneth Schermerhorn and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra in 2000 (Naxos, 3/01). The recordings of all four symphonies with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under Andrew Litton (Hyperion, 11/06) have been widely and justifiably praised. The Melbourne ensemble under Sir Andrew Davis come out well in this competition. The plethora of quotations, all turned into striking symphonic material, makes its impact in a finely controlled continuity in this performance.

The First Symphony – another 50-year delay before the premiere in 1953 – is less distinctive, as might be expected from a student work used initially as a graduation exercise. In the background there's Dvořák's *New World* – Ives had the nerve to

start his slow movement with a cor anglais solo – and plenty of Tchaikovsky too, but a catchy opening theme in the first movement, which later became a song, 'Rough Wind'. Michael Tilson Thomas and the Chicago Symphony recorded it impressively (Sony, 2/91), as the first use of the critical edition. The Melbourne performers rate highly and anyone wanting the first two symphonies together encapsulating early Ives can hardly do better; decently recorded too. **Peter Dickinson**

## Mahler

Symphonies - No 3<sup>a</sup>; No 4<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Genia Kühmeier sop <sup>a</sup>Waltraud Meier mez

<sup>a</sup>Boys of Limburg Cathedral Choir; <sup>a</sup>MDR Radio Choir, Leipzig; Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra / Paavo Järvi

Video director Michael Ciniselli

C Major Entertainment © ② DVD 719108;

③ 719204 (165' + 18' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTSS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live <sup>a</sup>2007, <sup>b</sup>2008. Bonus: Introductions to the Symphonies by Paavo Järvi



The acoustic of Kloster Eberbach is no more obtrusive a presence here than it was in the

*Resurrection* Symphony reviewed by David Gutman (3/15). Where the 12th-century Cistercian abbey exerts a more subtle influence is in the ascetic *mise-en-scène*, which combines with Paavo Järvi's monastic tonsure and restrained, pragmatic body language to fashion the image of a Mahler at a polar extreme from the films of Leonard Bernstein as sweaty visionary.

For all the smudgy chording in the Fourth's *Poco adagio* and the deliberate basic tempi adopted for the symphony as a whole, this isn't a 'cathedral' performance, haloed and softened by its surroundings. Järvi makes a point of Mahler's qualification for the second movement, 'without haste', and stabbing, expressionist accents beneath the solo violin lend a *Nachtmusik* character that intensifies during the slow movement, very slow until the violent plunge into D minor. We're forcefully reminded that the *Ruhevoll* marking which we may lazily associate with the movement as a whole applies only to its first hundred or so bars. Of Mahler's subtitle, 'St Ursula's smile', there is no trace, at least not until Genia Kühmeier makes her entrance and bestows her song of heavenly life as a gracious benediction and with a charm hitherto absent. Neither maternal nor girlish, she has an ideal voice for the part.



In the fourth movement of the Third, Waltraud Meier intones 'O Mensch' with oracular authority, like Sosostris (or Erda) on her day off, as though an urgent or pleading approach to the text were beneath her. The Frankfurt orchestra's response is more secure, and it's good to see how it plays together, how the first flute breathes in silent sympathy with the oboe solo.

From a rhythmically impatient yet (just about) controlled first movement it's quite possible to appreciate Järvi's particular affection for the Third to which he confesses in the accompanying interview. Summer marches in to a crisp beat and a snarling brass section, and the second-movement minuet is done gently, without parody. He takes a humanist view of the symphony's spiritual journey, dismissive of the fifth movement's kitsch religiosity (as he doesn't quite put it) and accordingly businesslike about the bims and bamms as no more than a prelude to the heartfelt finale – *Rubevöll* again but, against convention, played quicker than the corresponding movement in the Fourth, with the conductor taking his cue from the pressing and yearning of the string hymn and integrating it more thoroughly with what Mahler called its 'deeply painful interludes'. Järvi relishes, almost to excess,

the sheer heterogeneity of the piece. If it's a symphony you're after, don't miss Abbado in Lucerne (on Medici Arts).

**Peter Quantrill**

*Selected comparison:*

Lucerne Fest Orch, Abbado

(MEDI) DVD 205 6338; 205 6334

## McCabe

Fantasy on a Theme of Liszt<sup>a</sup>. Studies<sup>a</sup> – No 1, 'Capriccio'; No 2, 'Sostenuto'. Symphony No 1, 'Elegy'<sup>b</sup>. Tuning<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup>London Philharmonic Orchestra / John Snashall;

<sup>c</sup>National Youth Orchestra of Scotland /

John McCabe<sup>a</sup> pf

Naxos 8 571370 (62' • ADD)

Recorded <sup>b</sup>1967, from Pye TPLS13005;

<sup>a</sup>1977, from RCA RL25076 (6/77);

<sup>c</sup>1986, from Alpha CAPS367



Although acknowledged as a fine composer with a relatively good discography, in some respects the late, great John McCabe – who died on February 13 this year – never really had his due as a creative artist. This is partly down to his wide range of activities.

Beyond composing, he was a pianist (Haydn, Nielsen, Hindemith, Bax and many more), a writer (of studies of Bartók, Haydn, Rachmaninov, Rawsthorne), conductor and administrator. He was hard to pigeonhole.

Naxos's release of archival recordings celebrates McCabe as composer throughout, pianist in three shorter items and – the only example preserved for posterity – conductor, in his vibrant tone poem *Tuning* (1985), the inspiration for which came from listening to an orchestra tune up, alighting by chance on some felicitous chords. McCabe's First Symphony (1965) has, despite its suggestive title *Elegy*, no declared programme. Its eloquent reversal of the classic progression of darkness to light still unsettles, the three movements – Prelude, Dance and Elegy – starting in a Vaughan Williams-like glow and ending far away.

McCabe the pianist separates the orchestral items. These recordings of the first two piano Studies date from 1977 (he re-recorded them in 1998 on a BMS CD – nla), while Tamami Honma offers fascinating alternative views. McCabe's own have a vitality and insight that is hard to beat, despite some audible noise. His account of the *Fantasy on a Theme of Liszt*

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(1967) is even more compelling than Graham Caskie's: a performance McCabe, typically, was generous in his praise of. Naxos's re-engineering is splendid; here is a near-perfect introduction to McCabe's diversity but focused on his most important role – the composer. **Guy Rickards**

*Capriccio, Sostenuto* – selected comparison:

*Honma* (5/04) (METI) MSV92071

*Fantasy* – comparative version:

*Caskie* (METI) MSVCD92004

## Messiaen

Des canyons aux étoiles

**London Philharmonic Orchestra / Christoph Eschenbach**

LPO © 2 LPO0083 (100' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, November 2, 2013



What weird and wonderful challenges lie in the 100 minutes of Messiaen's *Des*

*canyons aux étoiles*. Lucky the London Philharmonic Orchestra to have such a gifted Principal Horn in John Ryan, who is able not only to negotiate the technical hurdles of the solo 'Appel interstellaire' in the second part but also to bring to it such a captivating sense of space and the unfathomable.

This recording is taken from a live performance at London's Royal Festival Hall in November 2013, which formed part of the Southbank Centre's 'The Rest is Noise' festival. Rightly, two other players are given appropriate credit on the packaging, Andrew Barclay on the xyloimba and Erka Öhman on the glockenspiel, both of them associated with the LPO. The pianist, brought in from outside, is the American Tzimon Barto, a brilliant, dynamic force to be reckoned with. But it is, above all, the way in which the component parts of *Des canyons aux étoiles* are so graphically defined and combined together as a mysterious, imposing paean to Nature that makes this interpretation so riveting. Christoph Eschenbach animates the score with a true feel for the Messiaen language, embracing the epic as well as the meditative, the syncopated rhythms of 'Bryce Canyon et les rochers rouge-orangé' as much as the contrast of solemnity and chirruping birdsong in 'La grive des bois' in Part 3. It is a performance that serves as a reminder that Messiaen described this elemental score as 'a work of praise and contemplation'. **Geoffrey Norris**

## D Pritchard

Violin Concerto, 'Wall of Water'

**Harriet Mackenzie** <sup>violin</sup>

**English String Orchestra / Kenneth Woods**

Nimbus Alliance © NI1555 (21' • DDD)



Every now and then a new work comes along that simply takes one's breath away. The

Violin Concerto *Wall of Water* (2014) by Deborah Pritchard is one such. Composed last year 'in response to the paintings by Maggi Hambling' – a sequence of at the time 13 paintings inspired by the Suffolk coast – the concerto is scored for a chamber group of 13 strings only: the soloist plus seven orchestral violinists, pairs of violas and cellos, and a double bass.

Despite the modest forces employed, the concerto is ablaze with colour across its 21 minutes, mirroring the transitions of colours in the Hambling paintings, with muted tones and colour ranges in the outer sections (corresponding roughly to paintings I-III and XII-XIII) enclosing a richer and more varied palette for paintings IV-XI, the whole framed by an opening solo violin cadenza and its varied reprise emerging from and returning to the darkness.

*Wall of Water* was written for Harriet Mackenzie (one member of the superb Retorica Duo, 2/13, 4/13), who plays this alternately elegiac and passionate music with a burning commitment and intensity that composers usually only dream of; but then she has been gifted a work whose high quality is rarely encountered. This is a wonderful performance of a wonderful concerto, completed by immaculate accompaniment from the English String Orchestra directed by the tireless Kenneth Woods. Just 21 minutes of music but still very, very strongly recommended.

**Guy Rickards**

## Ravel

Daphnis et Chloé<sup>a</sup>.

Pavane pour une infante défunte

<sup>a</sup>**Netherlands Radio Choir; Rotterdam**

**Philharmonic Orchestra / Yannick Nézet-Séguin**

BIS © BIS1850 (63' • DDD/DSD)



This recording of *Daphnis*, like the ballet itself, begins so softly that it is not until

some seconds in that you become satisfied that it is not a blank disc. Yannick Nézet-Séguin certainly has confidence in the

musicians of the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra to deliver a veiled, magical sound, and they live up to his expectations here not merely in the hushed swathes of the Introduction and 'Danse religieuse' but also in the wider spectra of sonority, atmosphere and colour that Ravel conjures up through his discreet, sentient use of a vast orchestra.

If it is the two suites from the ballet that are more frequently performed, the complete score is by no means a rarity, with notable recorded versions going back to Pierre Monteux and Ernest Ansermet, and including more recent ones by Pierre Boulez, Bernard Haitink and Claudio Abbado. But Nézet-Séguin's is a compelling addition. He seems to have this music in his soul, and he unquestionably has it at his fingertips, with a secure hold on the drama, the unfolding of events and the ballet's cohesive span. Moments of high activity, such as the 'Danse guerrière' in the second part, are given a terrifying intensity; but then, immediately afterwards, the performance reveals its quiet sensitivity in a lovingly shaped 'Danse suppliante de Chloé'. A similar, beguiling contrast emerges from the juxtaposition of the 'Pantomime' and the final 'Danse générale' in Part 3. The Netherlands Radio Choir add wordless haloes to a characterful, involving interpretation. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Saint-Saëns

Symphony No 3, 'Organ', Op 78<sup>a</sup>. Cyprés et lauriers, Op 156<sup>a</sup>. Danse macabre, Op 40

(arr Lemare, rev Warnier)

**Vincent Warnier** <sup>org</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Lyons National Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin**

Naxos © 8 573331 (58' • DDD)



In a very busy field, this stands out for the integrity of Leonard Slatkin's perceptive

musicianship. Finding that mixture of suavity, nervous tension, self-confidence and grandiloquence that characterises so much of Saint-Saëns's music, Slatkin creates a performance of the Third Symphony which is utterly compelling. Whether it is the mighty tread of the basses beneath the nervous chatter of violins and wind in the first *Allegro moderato*, the infinite gracefulness of the violin line in the *Poco adagio* or the angst-laden *Presto*, it all makes convincing musical sense. If it's the music you are after – rather than a simple sonic spectacle – look no further; this is the Saint-Saëns Third Symphony recording par excellence.





Ravel in his soul and at his fingertips: Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducts the Rotterdam Philharmonic in *Daphnis et Chloé*

The Lyons players lack for nothing in their commitment to Slatkin's potent reading: has that tantalisingly poised chord which closes the *Poco adagio* ever been as impeccably tuned as here (7'15")? As for the organ, it does not so much crown the orchestra as shine brightly from within it – which was Saint-Saëns's intention – adding a vivid bass presence to the luscious strings of the *Poco adagio* and tremendous breadth to the final statement of the big theme. Remarkably, organist Vincent Warnier does exactly what Saint-Saëns asks in the score (an all too rare practice) and, rather than burst in with all guns blazing in the first of the finale's three great C major chords, holds his fire until the very end.

Warnier shows breathtaking virtuosity in Edwin Lemare's fiendish transcription for solo organ of *Danse macabre*, although Lemare purists (do any exist?) might register surprise at some of the 'amendments' he has made, and he handles the opening of *Cypres et lauriers* with considerable panache. But in both works the very close-up recording of the huge organ in the Auditorium de Lyon casts the organ in too harsh a light; these works require a rather more spacious environment in which to reveal what charms they possess. **Marc Rochester**

## Shostakovich

Chamber Symphonies (arr Barshai) –  
Op 49a; Op 110a; Op 118a

The Dmitri Ensemble / Graham Ross

Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7634 (65' • DDD)



Rudolf Barshai began transcribing Shostakovich's string quartets when the composer was still alive, eventually fleshing out as many as five such works for larger forces. Shostakovich made approving noises about the now familiar Chamber Symphony Op 110a (based on the Eighth String Quartet) and all of them have been recorded previously. I'm not sure why Marina Frolova-Walker's booklet-note finds the sequence 'undeservedly obscure'. Least ubiquitous is *Eine kleine Symphonie*, Op 49a, the First String Quartet as recast in 1995. Barshai set down the lot in Milan late in life but his earlier, incomplete series with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe has greater finesse (DG, 12/05). Should you be seeking a single-CD selection offering comparably committed playing in higher-fi, the present disc certainly looks like a contender.

The Dmitri Ensemble has its own calling card in the Chamber Symphony Op 110a. Its opening *Largo* is effectively bleached out, not overly slow, its *scherzo* suitably brutal. There is perhaps a degree of English reserve in the third movement's sinister waltz. The rendition as a whole is nothing if not fresh and finely poised, the band's relatively modest forces placed in a generous acoustic (St John the Evangelist, Upper Norwood) without loss of clarity or focus. Indeed, the results are superb, no less lifelike than Channel Classics' SACD-encoded alternative with the Amsterdam Sinfonietta under Candida Thompson.

The two discs are not directly comparable. Thompson's group separates Op 110a and Op 118a with Weinberg's Concertino, Op 42. Graham Ross programmes Shostakovich/Barshai's Op 49a with its unexpected smidgeon of celesta, obtaining a defter response than the conductor/arranger himself. Many will prefer an all-Shostakovich programme even if Ross's take on Op 118a feels insufficiently vehement. Perhaps it's simply that the music's *furioso* element is blunted by the makeover. Likewise the intense loneliness of the passacaglia slow movement, flowing just a little too easily. Recommended nevertheless. **David Gutman**

*Chbr Syms – selected comparison:*

*Giuseppe Verdi SO, Milan, Barsbai (A/06) (BRIL) 8212*

*Op 110a, Op 118a – selected comparison:*

*Amsterdam Sinfonietta, Thompson*

(12/13) (CHNN) CCSSA34313

## Shostakovich

Symphony No 7, 'Leningrad', Op 60

Russian National Orchestra / Paavo Järvi

Pentatone ㉿ PTC518 6511 (73' • DDD/DSD)



If a conductor and orchestra can get the opening right (and it's amazing how many

sacrifice momentum to grandeur) then the chances are that the rest of this momentous piece will fall into place. Paavo Järvi and the Russian National Orchestra do just that. They are full of promise in the opening bars: bracing, upbeat, rhythmic, in truth about as optimistic as Shostakovich ever gets. And, as the music relaxes into a premature sense of well-being, the quality of the orchestral playing is self-evident – beautiful woodwind and string alternations, coolly accomplished. Then, against the barely audible rattle of side drum, something wicked this way comes: namely that pernicious theme.

It never ceases to amaze me how the daring musical metaphor at the heart of this first movement for so long negatively coloured opinions of the rest of the piece. The point of it was roundly missed as the tune which might have set Stalin's toe tapping underwent its terrifying *Boléro*-like mutations. Järvi and his engineers offer ruthless clarity and precision, exposing a rogue E flat clarinet with a flash of the theme at one point (never heard that before) and lacerating flutter-tongued trumpets as the shock and awe peaks. Shostakovich's instruments of choice for desolation – the bass clarinet and bassoon – express the numbness and loss with real eloquence.

It may be sacrilege to say that at times one wishes the Russian National Orchestra were less refined and more redolent of Russian orchestras of days gone by – but there is no denying the excellence of the playing. The ghostly dance that is the *Scherzo* is subtly coloured in the return with harp and fluttery flutes atmospherically underpinning the spookiest of bass clarinet solos. And there is pellucid beauty in the slow movement, where the strings spin out a passage of genuine heartbreak from their stark recitative.

So while I'm not sure I would go for Järvi over Petrenko and the RLPO among more

current recordings (I also have vivid memories of Bernstein and the Chicago Symphony on DG), the atmosphere of a real event is there, you might even say written into the piece. That long, slow, defiant, inexorable build to the coda is as gripping here as it always is – and, as the opening theme returns in hard-won triumph (that's why it is so important that its vaultingly optimistic character is properly established at the start), there is that thrilling *tenuto* in the trumpets lifting mind, body, and spirit into the final pages.

**Edward Seckerson**

*Selected comparisons:*

*Chicago SO, Bernstein (1/90<sup>8</sup>) (DG) 477 7587GGP2*

*RLPO, Petrenko (6/13) (NAXO) 8 573057*

## R Strauss • Rihm

Rihm Ernster Gesang R Strauss Eine Alpensinfonie, Op 64. Vier letzte Lieder<sup>a</sup>.

Malven (arr Rihm)

<sup>a</sup>Anja Harteros *sop*

Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

Video director **Michael Beyer**

C Major Entertainment ㉿ DVD 726408;

㉿ 726504 (113' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • s)

Recorded live 2014



Christian Thielemann has already recorded Strauss's *Alpensinfonie* twice – with the Vienna Philharmonic, once on CD (DG, 6/01) and once on DVD (Opus Arte, 9/12), from Salzburg – but the performance captured here, given as part of Dresden's Strauss celebrations last year with the orchestra that premiered the piece, offers something special.

The camera direction reveals the conductor as cool and calm in his podium manner until the moving 'Sunset', played with impassioned warmth, and the rest of the performance seems to trace a seamless line towards those final pages, with Thielemann avoiding all temptations to bombast or excess en route. That's not to say that the passages of excitement or exhilaration are given short shrift: the arrival at the summit is properly heady and breathtaking, the storm is awe-inspiring, as are the screw-turning build-ups preceding it, while the orchestra offers glittering virtuosity when required elsewhere.

It's a performance, however, that underlines primarily the work's philosophical underpinnings and its symphonic logic; others might offer more thrills (and spills), but few offer such coherence. Thielemann's own Salzburg DVD might just surpass it, by offering that

extra excitement as well, but that doesn't have quite such an appealing coupling.

If the 'Last Songs' on the cover might seem like a misprint, it reflects the fact that the Famous Four are here joined by the very last song, 'Malven' (1948), in a delicate and sensitive orchestration by Wolfgang Rihm. Some might object to the usual arrangement being upset – 'Malven' is inserted between 'Frühling' and 'September' – but it makes a touching addition to a set whose order and make-up were never entirely fixed.

At flowing tempi, Anja Harteros offers wonderful performances, and the voice – perhaps initially a little wirier of tone than in her earlier *Four Last Songs* with this orchestra under Fabio Luisi (Sony, 4/08) – is still beguilingly soft-grained; but the performances are distinguished primarily by the singer's sheer musicality, the phrasing and the intelligent use of the words. The final phrases of 'September' and 'Im Abendrot', in particular, are exquisite.

Rihm's own *Ernster Gesang* provides a suitably sincere and autumnal opening to what was clearly an outstanding concert.

**Hugo Shirley**

## Telemann

Concertos – TWV43:G6; TWV52:a1.

Suites – TWV55:a2; TWV55:D6

La Petite Bande / Sigiswald Kuijken

Accent ㉿ ACC24288 (79' • DDD)



Although this disc is entitled 'Concertos and Suites', and there are indeed two of each,

the concerto element is in a sense ever-present, for both suites feature a solo instrument in a manner similar to Bach's flute-led Second Orchestral Suite. In the booklet, Bart Coen wonders if Telemann's A minor Suite for recorder and strings could have been a model for that work, and certainly one feels that if a *galanterie* from the Bach were to pop up in it, it would not sound out of place. Not that the fecund Telemann would have needed the help; 'the solo suite par excellence for recorder from the Baroque period' (says Coen) is a good half-hour long without running out of steam. Next to it, the rich-toned G major Suite for viola da gamba and strings is more French and formal in manner, trumpet-like figures in the first two movements notwithstanding. Of the two concertos, the G major is an orchestra-less work which on another day Telemann might have called a 'quadro', and the





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A minor is more conventional, despite the unusual but delectable scoring.

All four have that charm and skill that seems never to have failed Telemann, and at least three of them have fallen into safe hands here. Sigmund Kuijken's long experience, sound expertise in interpretative detail and overall stylistic wisdom are perfect for Telemann, whose courtly 'light music' manner seldom lacks a reinforcing vein of bourgeois earthiness. These one-to-a-part performances combine a naturally clear balance with a pleasingly characterful wiriness, and nor are they any less accomplished technically: Bart Coen's virtuosity consists of a liquid clarity and precision uncomplicated by flashiness, and Kuijken, unexpectedly turning up on viola da gamba, is strong and assured. For me the only real disappointment is the A minor Concerto, here sluggish and over-grand. But that still left me with over an hour of music to enjoy.

Lindsay Kemp

## Vaughan Williams

Symphonies – No 4<sup>th</sup>; No 8<sup>th</sup>

London Philharmonic Orchestra /

<sup>b</sup>Vladimir Jurowski, <sup>a</sup>Ryan Wigglesworth

LPO (M) LPO0082 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London,

<sup>b</sup>September 24, 2008; <sup>a</sup>May 1, 2013



Both conductors – Ryan Wigglesworth (in No 4) and Vladimir Jurowski

(No 8) – make a strong case for these symphonies and indeed I can imagine them inter-changing with equal success. Wigglesworth's Fourth arrives with a roar but the outrage is in the remorseless drive; Jurowski suggests parallels with Rachmaninov's *The Bells* in the tintinnabulations of the Eighth.

I think the fury of the Fourth is more unremitting when the tempi of the outer movements are pushed to the point of recklessness. So many relax into the first movement's second subject, for instance, looking for and finding a degree of relief or solace – but its lyricism is full of anxiety and Wigglesworth lends an air of nervy breathlessness. The second half of the first movement (as indeed the still centre of the finale) evokes a fragile peace and there is an authentic ache in the LPO's string-playing throughout. The fractured syncopations of the *Scherzo* suggest a grotesque carnival of sorts, while the headlong militarism of the finale speaks for itself, the scoring shrill and demented.

It really comes off the page in the final pages, where Wigglesworth's abandon gives even the likes of Mitropoulos or Bernstein a run for their money.

In Jurowski's Eighth I hear Vaughan Williams's Pilgrim progressing once more. The shimmer of the beautifully scored opening pages lends a contemporary resonance and the archaic religiosity of tone is something which clearly chimes with Jurowski. The finale of the Fifth Symphony looms large in the closing pages of the first movement and 'Vanity Fair' surfaces in the beery *Scherzo*. But the Russian in England warms to the string-led Cavatina, where the work's dedication to 'glorious' Sir John Barbirolli is at its most heartfelt, and I can't help but think that the addition of *Turandot* tuned gongs to the finale's jubilant clangour is as much a nod to Barbirolli's Italian heritage as it is in Jurowski's mind an overtone of Rachmaninov. **Edward Seckerson**

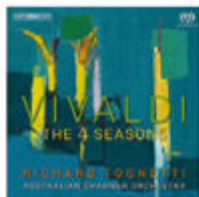
## Vivaldi

The Four Seasons, Op 8 Nos 1-4. Concertos – RV356; RV580; RV226 – Largo; RV562 – Grave. La verità in cimento, RV739 – Sinfonia

Australian Chamber Orchestra /

Richard Tognetti <sup>vn</sup>

BIS (P) BIS2103 (68' • DDD/DSD)



As I write, the Australian Chamber Orchestra are touring Australia with *The Four Seasons* interspersed (seasoned?) by contributions from oud player Joseph Tawadros and percussionist James Tawadros – reminding us that 'Venice is barely a day's sail from Cairo'. Alas, the only exoticism you can expect from the ACO's recorded version is a reproduction of West Australian artist Guy Grey-Smith's striking painting *Karri Trees*, which adorns the booklet cover.

Nevertheless, although this isn't a live recording, what you do get is all the excitement and spontaneity of a live performance – along with the ACO's trademark visceral approach to early music. Throughout, Tognetti practices a kind of refined larrikinism as he dances over ensemble paragraphs that seemed hewn from granite. Or perhaps a better metaphor is the salt water that runs in rivulets over the ripped body of a bronzed Aussie lifesaver?

Perhaps that's taking things a little far. But there is some exceptional playing here, which, while it doesn't reach the exalted heights of Carmignola and the Venice

Baroque Orchestra (still my favourite *Four Seasons*), has all the poetry and ferocity of the best accounts. And the overall narrative is brilliantly stage-managed: in *Spring*, Tognetti seems deliberately to hold back, setting us up for the extremes of *Summer* before a rather forthright *Autumn* similarly leads to a *Winter* crackling with startlingly realised sonic effects.

Of the fillers, the B minor Concerto for four violins and the Sinfonia from the opera *La verità in cimento* best demonstrate another quality for which the ACO are well known: an utterly unified aesthetic which admits of the wildest fantasy. **William Yeoman**

*Four Seasons* – selected comparison:

*Carmignola, Venice Baroque Orch, Marcon*

(11/00) (SONY) SK51352 or 88697 71980-2

## Vivaldi

'I concerti dell'addio'

Violin Concertos – RV189; RV273;

RV286; RV367; RV371; RV390

Europa Galante / Fabio Biondi <sup>vn</sup>

Glossa (P) GCD923402 (79' • DDD)



The fusion of elegance, vivacity and taste in the playing of these Vivaldi concertos

is a feature that warmly recommends itself and gives this recording an edge over others in a catalogue already stuffed with discs of the fertile Red Priest's music. Against all the odds, Fabio Biondi and Europa Galante have found a new peg on which to hang this concerto grouping. This is not the successful, lauded Vivaldi of Venice but the downcast, virtually neglected Vivaldi of Vienna, the city in which he spent his dying months.

The album is aptly entitled 'Farewell Concertos', for they are among a batch that Vivaldi, just six weeks before his death in July 1741, signed over to the music-loving Vinciguerra VI, Count of Collalto. They survive in a collection in Brno. Vivaldi was able to summon up sensations of grief even in the concertos of his happier days, so it is perhaps fanciful to detect premonitions of death or a melancholy comment on his predicament in Austria in the *Largo* of the C major Concerto, RV189, but it is a movement of particular poignancy. Things perk up in the ensuing finale, which bristles with those lithe ideas and flashes of violin virtuosity that can make Vivaldi's writing so exciting.

That is certainly the case here. Biondi has all the technical facility that the music demands but he and Europa Galante also possess a refined sense of phrasing and



perspective, together with a judicious range of colour, touch, dynamics and rhythmic zest. **Geoffrey Norris**

## Walton

Cello Concerto<sup>a</sup>. Symphony No 2. Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten

<sup>a</sup>Paul Watkins VC

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Edward Gardner  
Chandos ⑤ CHSA5153 (70' • DDD/DSD)



Edward Gardner directs a superbly perceptive account of Walton's Second Symphony, exhilarating in its purposeful thrust yet never flinching from this music's formidable nervous energy and edgy, at times desperate undertow; I don't think I've ever been made more aware of the manic glee with which we are hurtled into the first-movement coda (beam to 7'22") – or, for that matter, the whiff of sulphur left behind by its wry pay-off. Not only is Gardner fully alive to the finale's extraordinary variety of mood and myriad imaginative touches, he's especially appreciative of the piercing, melancholy

sense of isolation and snarling menace that stalk the slow movement; how fastidiously he attends to Walton's diaphanous textures and how tenderly he shapes the sinuous melodic lines. Make no mistake: with cracking playing from the BBC SO, Gardner's is a conspicuously insightful reading of this underrated score – arguably the most gripping to have come my way since Szell (9/62), Previn (5/74) and Mackerras (12/89).

The programme commences with the *Improvisations on an Impromptu of Benjamin Britten*. Premiered by Josef Krips and the San Francisco Symphony in January 1970, it's a typically resourceful and hugely pleasing set of variations on the theme from the slow movement of Britten's Piano Concerto and receives a watchful, lucid and affectionate outing. So, too, does the Cello Concerto, which finds soloist Paul Watkins at his customarily assured, urgently expressive and irreproachably sensitive best. There's a lot to like in this classy collaboration, especially the flashing brilliance and swagger of the *scherzo* and a pungently characterful, excitingly cogent finale; certainly, the big-hearted Watkins earns a place alongside the likes of Li-Wei Qin and Christian Poltéra (ABC Classics and BIS, 1/15) towards the front of a hotly

competitive field. Full-blooded, expansive and judiciously balanced SACD sound; a gem of a disc. **Andrew Achenbach**

## Weinberg

Violin Concerto, Op 67<sup>a</sup>. Symphony No 4, Op 61

<sup>a</sup>Ilya Gringolts vln

Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra / Jacek Kaspszyk  
Warner Classics ⑤ 2564 62248-3 (62' • DDD)



Back in the mid-1970s, HMV included these two works among the carefully selected

Soviet repertoire they issued on licence from Melodiya. Those performances – Kondrashin conducting, with Leonid Kogan in the Concerto – resurfaced on CD in the late 1990s, as part of Olympia's pioneering Weinberg survey. Now the same works appear again but in the context of a more dramatic international re-evaluation of the composer.

In recent years the Poles have gone some way towards re-adopting Weinberg (a native Varsovian) to the extent of actually leading the way with his symphonies. The Fourth Symphony is probably the most immediately appealing of the cycle of 26,

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with a slow movement of both delicacy and depth of feeling that draws on Weinberg's own songs – the most conspicuous remaining gap in his recorded output. Jacek Kaspszyk takes a more relaxed approach than either Kondrashin or Gabriel Chmura; but, much as I admire his poise and sprightliness, there is considerably more drive and relish in both rival versions.

Gringolts and Kaspszyk again take more time over the Concerto than either Kogan and Kondrashin or the recent Linus Roth and Mihkel Kütson. The results are similar to the Symphony, in that the attractive nuances and shades uncovered are outweighed, for me at least, by a definite loss in terms of dash and urgency. Some may prefer the slightly more recessed orchestral balance. But here, too, I favour the edgier, more forward sound of the rival versions, and in the Symphony the Warsaw Philharmonic is outplayed by its Katowician counterpart.

Kaspszyk has come in for some scorn in the blogosphere for having his name larger than the composer's on the CD cover. But surely he couldn't have been so crass. I'm more inclined to suspect Warner's designers, who also saddle the issue with an ugly grey-and-yellow card casing, a pointless oblong format and barely legible upper-case fonts.

**David Fanning**

*Vn Conc – selected comparison:*

Roth, *Deutsches SO Berlin, Kütson*  
(7/14) (CHAL) CC72627

*Sym No 4 – selected comparison:*

Nat Polish RSO Katowice, Chmura  
(11/04) (CHAN) CHAN10237

## Bizjak Piano Duo

**Martinů** Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra, H292 **Poulenc** Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra **Shostakovich** Concertino **Stravinsky** Sonata for Two Pianos **Lidija Bizjak, Sanja Bizjak** *pfs* **Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra / Radoslaw Szulc**  
Onyx (M) ONYX4148 (64' • DDD)



The Serbian-born sisters Lidija and Sanja Bizjak have devised a clever programme, pairing two concertos for two pianos and orchestra with two works for two pianos alone. Each concerto harks back to earlier musical forms and each is most characteristic of its composer.

The Concerto by Martinů is the least-recorded of these four, perhaps on account of the difficulties facing the pianists and the orchestra in achieving impeccable

co-ordination. I wondered if the Gustav-Siegle Hall in Stuttgart might prove a shade too reverberant for its *concertante* character but such qualms were allayed by a fine recording. Martinů's music sparkles under the Bizjaks' fingers. They relish the jazzy inflections and playful counterpoint of the outer movements while gently inflecting the intimate chordal progressions around the orchestral tapestry in the darker slow movement. Martinů quotes, or so it seems, the 1920s hit 'I want to be happy' in the finale, a feeling we share in this persuasive performance.

In the Poulenc Double Concerto, the soloists and the Stuttgart Philharmonic under Radoslaw Szulc bring all the fun of the fair to the exuberant opening movement. Images of men on stilts come to mind in those descending bass octaves near the start, and contorted reflections in giant mirrors loom in the rasping brass figures in the reprise of the opening music. Echoes of the Balinese gamelan in the exquisitely scored closing minutes of the first movement lead deftly into the slow one, with its kinship to Mozart's K467. The pure opening melody, so easy on the ear, is then harmonised in Poulenc's distinctive manner. In the whirligig *Allegro*, where those tunes keep coming, the fabulous fingerwork of the sisters keeps spirits high.

The Concertino by Shostakovich, written for his 15-year-old son and fellow student Alla Maloletkova, strikes me as the most inventive of his lighter pieces. Argerich and Zilberstein gave us a spectacular live performance of it on a recent all-Shostakovich disc (EMI, 11/07), but this one too has a vibrancy and panache as the young pair whoop it up in the *Allegro*'s Russian-style boogie-woogie as well as executing the self-important introduction, where every 'i' is dotted and 't' crossed. It's a perfect foil to the more self-conscious Stravinsky Sonata, in character not unlike his preceding Symphony in C. The Bizjaks are perfectly attuned to the stop-start nature of that amorphous tune in the first movement. The uncluttered theme and variations and the likeable *Allegretto* flow along a natural path. A disc that looks like it will be coming round for further mentions in the Awards season.

**Adrian Edwards**

## 'Live from the Philharmonie'

**Berlioz** *Symphonie fantastique*, Op 14 **Borodin** Prince Igor – Dance of the Polovtsian Maidens; Polovtsian Dances **Escaich** Concerto for Orchestra **Ravel** *Daphnis et Chloé* – Suite No 2 **Varèse** *Tuning Up*

**Orchestre de Paris / Paavo Järvi**

Orchestre de Paris (M) (72' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Great Hall of the Philharmonie de Paris, January 14 & 15, 2015



The Philharmonie de Paris, Western Europe's newest concert hall, is about

as far from the centre of France's capital as Hackney is from that of London, its location also bordered by rivers, marshes and a large bypass road system. It's not (yet) a chic area but the new building completes the so-called 'City of Music' by (re)housing the Orchestre de Paris, founded now nearly 50 years ago. The new organisation has made immediate arrangements for its work to be heard and seen online – both the opening concerts from which the present release's material has been selected (and much else) can be viewed in their entirety.

The predominantly French choice of material here may omit the star line-up of soloists (Capuçon, Grimaud, Lang Lang even) present in January but provides a good (and hard) test of what the band can now do in its new hall. As heard on this download-only release, first impressions – perhaps influenced by the hall's exploded layout – are of the clarity and breadth (if that's a possible description) of the sound as recorded rather than of special depth, resonance or warmth. The layering of the scores being performed – most relevant here in the *Daphnis* Suite and the new Escaich Concerto – seems in all cases clear; sections of the orchestra do not overrun and 'smudge' each other.

Performance-wise, Paavo Järvi, now in his penultimate year with the orchestra, has their attention and fluency throughout this repertoire. The *Symphonie fantastique* – again standing duty as the French symphony, as it did for the orchestra's recorded debut – is in almost every way a superior performance to that first one. The *idée fixe* is never fussed over, the Waltz exciting and the third movement's *Tristan*-inspiring wind solos and pauses well judged and captured. Escaich's especially commissioned new Concerto, as its name would suggest, both shows off the sections of the orchestra well and bears some relation to Bartók's identically named work in form and sound. The Varèse piece – a reconstruction by one of his students of a rejected film score number – deserves wide circulation. This is an enjoyable programme and calling card for the 'Grande Salle' of the new venue. **Mike Ashman**





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**Gabrieli Consort & Players**  
**Paul McCreesh** conductor

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# Brahms's Piano Sonata No 1, Op 1

**Barry Douglas** talks to Jeremy Nicholas about Brahms's strangely overlooked First Sonata

**B**rahms's Op 1: one of the greatest Op 1s in musical history. Except it is not a genuine Op 1. The Sonata in C major was written after the Sonata in F sharp minor, Op 2, and the *Scherzo*, Op 4. It was a crafty marketing move by Brahms to assign the Op 1 label to what he rightly considered to be the work that, of the two sonatas, was more emphatically demonstrative of his talents.

Opus 1 and Op 2 are encountered far less frequently than the Sonata in F minor, Op 5. A surprising number of great pianists who have recorded and played Op 5 have not touched the earlier sonatas. Barry Douglas finds it hard to understand. He is working through the entire keyboard works of Brahms for Chandos – the results have been enthusiastically received – and has a strong affection for the First Sonata, which will appear on the next instalment.

It's a work that is written to impress. 'The First Sonata is technically very, very challenging compared with the other two. That may be one reason it's not played as much. I can understand why the Second Sonata is not a crowd-pleaser because of its ending. The Third Sonata is a wonderful piece, certainly the most mature of the three and, even though it has five movements, is not as challenging as the first two. Perhaps that's part of the explanation.'

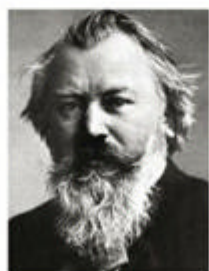
Many commentators have noticed the parallels between Brahms's opening bars of the First Sonata's first movement and those of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata and the fact that, in bar nine, he repeats the same figure a tone lower, just as in the *Waldstein* Sonata. 'Brahms's reverence for Beethoven is well documented, so it's quite possible it was an *homage*,' says Douglas. 'Certainly some of the textures and the way he writes for the left hand – that richness – do strike me as trying to emulate Beethoven. It was said that Brahms was a master of the old forms. Then you have Schoenberg who said that Brahms was the progressive revolutionary. So, in the old forms Brahms was revolutionary, which must have appealed to Schumann. In the [first-movement] exposition, already you have the elements of canon and fugue. Wagner wanted to throw everything out and start again but Brahms in a certain quiet way was able to shake things up and extend the range and expressivity of the piano. It began to sound like an orchestra. This sonata is really a symphony.'

Douglas points at the second bar after the key change from three flats to two sharps. 'I think there should be an extra bar here. The left hand works very well but I don't understand the



'It's really a symphony': Douglas has great affection for Brahms's First Piano Sonata

right and why he's chosen G sharp – it's such an acute change of key. He's trying to get back quickly and it's a gear change that doesn't seem natural. It doesn't sit right. I'm sure there's something missing. And, look, the articulation is different: there's no accent on the G sharp [unlike the similar figure in the preceding two bars]. Maybe he knows it's a bit awkward. That's my theory. We as performers and interpreters must help that make sense to the public. Also if you skate over this



## The historical view

**Robert Schumann**  
*Diary, October 1, 1853*

'Visit from Brahms (a genius).' Schumann's laconic diary entry having heard Brahms play the First Sonata. Six days later, he wrote to Joachim: 'Johannes is the true apostle, who will produce revelations.'

**James Huneker**  
*Mezzotints in Modern Music, 1899*

'Just compare Schumann's Op 1 *Abegg* Variations with the slow movement of this sonata and you may realise the superior educational advantages enjoyed by Brahms.'

**Joseph Joachim, dedicatee of the First Sonata, on first hearing Brahms play**  
*Quoted in Walter Niemann: Brahms, 1937*

'His piano-playing, so tender, so imaginative, so free, and so full of fire... held me absolutely spell-bound.'




section too much it just sounds chaotic. You have to take the audience by the hand here.'

He turns to the passage just after this. 'For me, this is almost like something out of *The Flying Dutchman*. It's very dramatic, very operatic, very visual. And here,' he moves on to the final page of the movement, 'this is like *Siegfried*. I think Brahms and Wagner are linked up – whether they like it or not!'

The slow movement is a set of variations on an old German folksong. 'It's a very melancholic theme sung in the Alpine pastures. It's lonely music – there's a cold feel to it,' observes Douglas. 'You can just hear them singing this in a little Alpine church. There's an incredibly original creative moment here [he indicates eight bars where the metre changes from 2/4 to 4/16 and 3/16 and back again] in which he foreshadows the *Scherzo*. It's one of the highlights for me. It looks incongruous on the page. Every time I play this bit in public, I want to stop and just look out and see peoples' faces – but I can't! I have to keep concentrating. There's a lot of stop-starting in this movement – and that's a tough thing for an interpreter because you have to keep the momentum.'

*'Brahms in a certain quiet way was able to shake things up and extend the range and expressivity of the piano'* – Barry Douglas

We turn to bar 29 in the *Scherzo*. More Beethoven. 'This is all horn calls. It's like the Trio of the *Scherzo* from the *Eroica* Symphony with the three horns and timpani.' There's a lot of octave work in the movement. 'White to black or black to white is OK,' Douglas affirms, 'but with Brahms – and it happens a lot in Brahms, especially in the First Concerto – you get a lot of white note octaves which is more difficult. It's a *tour de force*, this movement, and technically challenging, especially the passage before the Trio, a foreshadowing of his own *Tragic Overture* and the First Concerto where you have a long pedal note (in this case an E natural) with the harmony changing above it. It's a good Brahms/Baroque device. The one challenge of the Trio is that the six quavers in every bar can become monotonous. I find myself saying "Dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-dah – what can I do with it?" So you have to shade them with dynamics. Then at the end of the Trio is a very early use of a famous Brahms device of writing out a *ritenuto* and *diminuendo* in the notation as well as putting in *rit e dim* in words. Why he bothered to do both I don't know.'

Barry Douglas played the First Sonata a lot in the 1990s but had not returned to it until 18 months ago. 'It all came back quickly. A lot of things I was infuriated by before no longer infuriated me, but now other things infuriated me. Not the music – not the genius of Brahms – but how I could make it work. My only criticism of the last movement is the coda, where he must have been tired, pissed off and needed a beer. I'm sounding like a composition teacher – and I say this in all humility: it becomes a bit like Rossini (with all due respect to Rossini), a bit too much tonic/dominant. I think the transition to the coda is fascinating. The eight bars with the F sharp in the bass before he goes into the final *presto agitato* is genius music. You feel the fear in the writing. The rests, the dynamics: this is really dramatic music.' 

► To read Gramophone's review of Barry Douglas's Brahms, turn to page 61

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# Chamber



Richard Whitehouse reviews  
a disc of new music for horn:  
*'The dedicatee's performance compels in  
its consummate technical mastery and  
penetrating poetic scope'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 55**



Arnold Whittall listens to new  
works by women composers:  
*'Especially arresting in its refusal to  
underwrite the settled categories of Western  
musical traditions'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**

## JS Bach • CPE Bach

**CPE Bach Trio, Wq88 JS Bach Viola da gamba  
Sonatas – BWV1027; BWV1028; BWV1029**

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(Tatty Theo *vc* Carolyn Gibley *hpd*)

Avie   AV2321 (59' • DDD)



Should it always be a  
viola da gamba of six  
or seven gut and metal  
wound strings, tuned  
in fourths – a third in the middle – played  
with bow held underhand, neck wrapped in  
adjustable frets, no end-pin? Or a Baroque  
cello of four gut strings tuned in fifths,  
played with convex bow conventionally  
held, unfretted neck, no end-pin? Perhaps  
a difference in timbre between the two  
instruments might then have not been  
conspicuous; but here there's a brighter  
than expected edge to Tatty Theo's tone.  
Has she substituted metal strings?

Whatever, there is a close match  
between cello and a harpsichord of cutting  
transients which fits the businesslike  
virtuosity of much of the playing. Choice  
of tempi cannot be faulted and rhythm is  
exact; too often very exact, especially for  
the kernel of slow movements to be  
revealed. Johann Mattheson, a  
contemporary of Bach, speaks of 'the  
tenderness of *adagios*' while believing that  
'a highly articulated style, especially in  
lyrical pieces, has little or no flowing  
quality and is to be avoided'. Absence of  
pliability from Theo and Carolyn Gibley,  
not only in the slow movements but in the  
fast ones too, is a flaw that devalues their  
performances of Bach *père et fils*. A  
difference rests in the interpretations of  
Jordi Savall (viola da gamba) and Ton  
Koopman, for whom the absence of  
dynamic and expressive markings is not a  
restriction but a spur to uncovering the  
dramatic shapes of these sonatas through  
their varying moods.

**Nalen Anthoni**

*Va da gamba Sons – selected comparison:*

*Savall, Koopman (6/00) (ALLA) AV9812*

## JS Bach

**Musikalisches Opfer, BWV1079**

**Ricercar Consort**

Mirare   MIR237 (54' • DDD)



The Ricercar  
Consort's recording  
activities in recent  
years have focused  
mainly on sacred music for voices and  
instruments, so it is nice to find them  
turning to the intimacy of the canonic  
compendium that is Bach's *Musical Offering*  
(to which, of course, their name could  
hardly be more appropriate). They do so  
fielding an ensemble of four players – the  
flute, violin, harpsichord and gamba  
required to perform the beautiful trio  
sonata Bach built around Frederick the  
Great's tortuous but haunting theme. It  
means that this is not as colourful a  
recording as those by Ensemble Sonnerie  
(Virgin, 7/96) or Le Concert des Nations  
(Alia Vox, 12/01), and that there is no  
possibility of an ensemble rendition of the  
six-part Ricercar, but thankfully the  
harpsichord-playing of Maude Gratton is  
one of the highlights of the disc. On a fine-  
sounding but uncredited instrument, she  
allows enough air into the six-part Ricercar  
to prevent its texture from becoming  
senselessly thick, and is sprightly and clear  
in the freer-spirited three-part Ricercar.

Nor is there a shortage of wisdom  
elsewhere. As ever with this group,  
everything is very particular and refined,  
and I enjoyed the way they characterised  
the canons, giving a courtly gamba-and-  
harpsichord feel to the one celebrating the  
augmentation of the King's fortunes, and a  
noble solemnity to the one whose upward  
modulations mimic the rise of his glory.  
Only the Trio Sonata disappoints: the  
opening *Largo* is a touch flat-footed and  
the third-movement *Andante* too polite,  
its striking, *Empfindsamer* gestures  
underplayed and lacking the boldness and  
excitement revealed in the recording of this  
sonata by Musica ad Rhenum (Vanguard,

11/96). To my mind only the finale picks  
up the pace as it should. A bit more space  
in the recording, and around the violin  
in particular, would also have been an  
improvement, and at no great cost in  
essential clarity. **Lindsay Kemp**

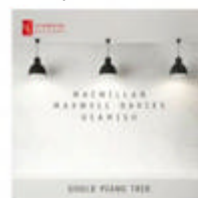
## Beamish • MacMillan • Maxwell Davies

**Beamish Piobaireachd MacMillan Piano Trio  
No 2. Fourteen Little Pictures Maxwell Davies**

**Piano Trio, 'A Voyage to Fair Isle'**

**Gould Piano Trio**

Champs Hill   CHRCDO90 (66' • DDD)



After their splendid  
Mendelssohn  
recording (11/14), the  
Gould Trio turn to a

very different programme. The MacMillan  
works are strongly contrasted in character;  
despite its modest title, the *Fourteen Little  
Pictures* (1997) is ambitious, predominantly  
sombre and elegiac in mood. The pictures  
merge into one another, with a number of  
cross-references, giving the work a strong,  
consistent trajectory. The trio don't hold  
back from projecting its more extreme,  
violent gestures, yet are able, too, to  
illuminate the score's subtler, delicate  
moments. MacMillan's Second Trio is  
more playful and lively, and not without  
its grotesque moments, especially in the  
distorted references to various popular  
musical styles, yet imaginatively coloured  
and clearly structured. Sally Beamish's  
*Piobaireachd* is an essay in writing a modern  
version of a pibroch, using the typical  
variation techniques employed by Scottish  
pipers. The theme has a calm, wistful  
beauty, with the variations gradually  
gaining in liveliness and energy.

*A Voyage to Fair Isle* commemorates a  
visit by Maxwell Davies to that tiny island  
in July 2002, when its 70 inhabitants  
mounted a music festival. The music  
powerfully evokes the feeling of loneliness  
in this most remote part of the UK, but  
also the islanders' strong sense of



community. The sudden appearance of a Scottish fiddler (Lucy Gould) comes as quite a jolt; but, whereas earlier in his career Maxwell Davies might have used stylistic surprises with satirical intent, here the folk music is skilfully integrated into the landscape. Throughout the programme, the Gould Trio impress by their commitment, expertise and idiomatic understanding. **Duncan Druce**

## Bruckner · Busoni · Debussy

'Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen, Vol 1 - Arrangements for Ensemble'

**Bruckner** Symphony No 7

**Busoni** Berceuse élégiaque, Op 42

**Debussy** Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune

**Gruppo Montebello / Henk Guittart**

Etcetera © KTC1483 (78' • DDD)



Trevor Pinnock and the Royal Academy of Music Soloists Ensemble – who have

recorded symphonies by Mahler and Bruckner in arrangements made for, or inspired by, Arnold Schoenberg's Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (Society for Private Music Performances) – have some new rivals on the block. Henk Guittart founded the Schoenberg Ensemble in 1974, and Gruppo Montebello – Italian for 'beautiful mountain'; in German 'Schoenberg' – is the branding he gives all his recent projects: this incarnation of the ensemble was pieced together from faculty members of the Banff Centre, who recorded their album against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains – a not inappropriate setting for Bruckner.

This chamber Bruckner could, of course, be no one's idea of a definitive Seventh – but performances of pint-size Romanticism need to do more than trade off novelty value and, by that yardstick, Guittart has pulled off something rather special. Schoenberg originally carved the transcription duties up between three of his composition students – Hanns Eisler (movts 1 and 3), Erwin Stein (2) and Karl Rankl (4) – and Guittart, using the Nowak edition as his point of reference, has added a flute part and reconfigured the division of labour between the original harmonium and piano parts.

It's a pity that the Polyfilla piano takes the melodic lead in the *Scherzo* – psychologically, you're reminded that you are listening to an arrangement – but otherwise this reduced-fat Bruckner is boldly objectifying and intimate. Slimmed-

down strings mean the opening *tremolo* unavoidably implies a pulse (I was reminded of John Adams's *Shaker Loops*), but the harmonic weight is intriguingly redistributed elsewhere. Counterpoint begins to override harmonic blocks, especially during the finale's Byzantine closing pages, while the gravity of the *Adagio* comes with added vulnerability.

In all honesty I prefer the sensual allure of Pinnock's small-scale Debussy *Prélude à L'après-midi d'un faune* (Linn, 7/13). But this playing is very classy too – and other recordings of this chamber Bruckner Seventh lack the sunshine of that extra flute. **Philip Clark**

## Enescu · Prokofiev · Shostakovich

**Enescu** Cello Sonata, Op 26 No 1 – Allegro

**Prokofiev** Cello Sonata, Op 119

**Shostakovich** Cello Sonata, Op 40

**Laura Buruiana** vc **Alexandra Siloce** pf

Avie © AV2302 (56' • DDD)



Laura Buruiana and Alexandra Siloce, who both come from Romania, make a

formidable duo, playing with immense assurance, verve and finesse. The Enescu is a product of his precocious teenage years, a sonata first movement that remained a torso. Written in the same year (1898) as the official First Sonata, it's a strong piece, romantic, forceful and affecting. This performance matches the youthful enthusiasm of the music, with Siloce presenting her elaborate part in the grand manner, yet never swamping the cello.

The Prokofiev similarly offers rich-toned playing, with much variety of sound and articulation bringing out the different facets of its complex first movement. The conclusion of the sonata, grandiose and triumphant, is difficult to hear without reflecting on the composer's recent trouble with Soviet officialdom. A reply to just criticism or an ironic adoption of the required positive attitude? In a performance of such conviction, the question is all the more sharply focused.

The Shostakovich elicits from the duo a combination of high spirits, virtuoso panache and, in its darker moments, intense concentration. It's a very different performance from the one recorded in 1946 by the composer and Daniil Shafran, which adopts more spacious tempi in all four movements, focusing our attention on details of phrasing and articulation, and making the changes of mood (some of them

## IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

### • Decca doubles

Violinist **Nicola Benedetti** joins the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra** and **Kirill Karabits** while *Gramophone's* current Artist of the Year, **Leonidas Kavakos** focuses on virtuoso violin showstoppers. And two senior Decca pianists have been busy too. **Mitsuko Uchida** was joined by soprano **Dorothea Röschmann**, live at Wigmore Hall, for Schumann's Op 39 *Liederkreis* and *Frauenliebe und -leben* along with Alban Berg's *Seven Early Songs*. Nelson Freire has recorded his first album of music by JS Bach – the sessions took place in the Teldex Studios in Berlin.

### • VW from the RLPO

Violinist-turned-conductor **Andrew Manze** has started a Vaughan Williams symphony cycle for Onyx with the **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**. Symphonies Nos 2 (*A London Symphony*) and 8 will appear from Onyx next spring.

### • Waley-Cohen and Ehnes go solo

Violinists **Tamsin Waley-Cohen** and **James Ehnes** have been busy in the recording studio. Waley-Cohen, joined by her regular partner, pianist **Huw Watkins**, has recorded Szymanowski and Hahn at Saffron Hall (an autumn release from Signum). And the *Gramophone* Award-winning, Canadian James Ehnes has recorded sonatas by Elgar, Debussy and Respighi for Onyx (a March 2016 release). His partner was pianist **Andrew Armstrong**.

### • Concertos from Hyperion

Two major concerto releases on the way. From **Stephen Hough** (below), the **CBSO** and **Andris Nelsons**, piano concertos by Dvořák and Schumann. And from **Steven Isserlis**, the **Philharmonia** and **Paavo Järvi**, the cello concertos by Elgar and Walton, coupled with Holst's *Invocation*.



violent) more pointed. And the slow tempo of the *Largo* gives Shafran the space to play with more plangent expression. But there's room, I think, for a different approach, and Siloea and Buruiana are entirely persuasive. **Duncan Druce**

*Shostakovich – selected comparison:*

*Shafran, Shostakovich (10/96<sup>8</sup>)*

*(MELO) MELCD100 1938 or (DORE) DHR7741*

## Gorton

Orfordness<sup>a</sup>. Austerity Measures II<sup>b</sup>.

Fosdyke Wash<sup>c</sup>. Cello Sonata No 2<sup>d</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Christopher Redgate <sup>ob</sup><sup>d</sup>Neil Heyde <sup>vc</sup>

<sup>a</sup>cZubin Kanga <sup>pf</sup><sup>d</sup>Milton Mermikides <sup>elec</sup>s

<sup>b</sup>cKreutzer Quartet

Métier © MSV28550 (61' • DDD)



Now in his mid-thirties, David Gorton is a composer working in the more radical

domain of post-war British music. This new disc provides an entrée into his recent output, opening with the evocation of weapons testing and UFO sightings connected with the Suffolk coastal area that is Orfordness – its interplay of febrile activity and inward stasis more convincing than the rather gratuitous interpolation for tape at its centre. *Austerity Measures II* might be construed as an oboe quintet but the oboe part was written for the 'Howarth-Redgate' instrument that Christopher Redgate plays exclusively, while the piece itself amalgamates three earlier works whose contrasted ensembles underlie the unstable repetitions in which this music abounds.

Taking the name of an area near to where the composer grew up, *Fosdyke Wash* is even more intensive a rethinking of the piano quintet – with the mainly quiet and inward writing for the strings given continuity by the recourse to harmonics and bowed sounds of the piano-writing. After which piece, the Second Cello Sonata inhabits an altogether more dynamic realm over its 10 sections that, between them, pursue an unpredictable trajectory, one made more so by the role of electronics in its opening-out of the textural facets encountered as this piece unfolds.

Gorton makes no concessions to his performers – not that those heard here require any 'easy options' when it comes to realising such intricate and exacting pieces. Excellent sound and detailed notes also complement the interpretative conviction needed for this unequivocal music.

**Richard Whitehouse**

## Grieg • Grainger • Nielsen

**Grainger** Scandinavian Suite **Grieg** Cello Sonata, Op 36. Intermezzo. Violin Sonata No 3, Op 45 – Allegretto. Andante con moto **Nielsen** Sænk kun dit hoved, du blomst, Op 21 No 4

**Andreas Brantelid** <sup>vc</sup> **Christian Ihle Hadland** <sup>pf</sup>

BIS © BIS2120 (67' • DDD/DSD)



Grieg's 1882/83 Cello Sonata was premiered by the composer accompanying

Friedrich Grützmacher (the cellist who made up Boccherini concertos). It has remained a regular calling point in a not huge Romantic repertoire for the instrument, although its emotional directness and relative formal simplicity have not pleased all commentators. (A past review in this journal even dismissed the work as 'melodrama' – 12/09.) The programming alongside it here is intelligent and logical. Grainger's Suite is a set of musical postcards from Norway, Denmark and Sweden (the last including a tune later made famous by Stan Getz), written for a Danish cellist (like Brantelid) with whom he performed Grieg's Sonata.

The quite magical spring in the step of these new performances comes from that unique-seeming 'Nordic' balance and understanding between accompanying instruments shared by Brantelid and his young Norwegian partner, and from how BIS has recorded them at Suffolk's Potton Hall. Neither in the Sonata nor in Grainger's Suite does the piano dominate or rival the soloist as it tends to do in more mainstream European performances. Sample, for example, the recording of the Sonata (one of two) made by the Norwegian cellist Truls Mørk, originally for Virgin, where Jean-Yves Thibaudet, no less, tries from the word go to make his decorated accompaniment *primus inter pares*. Never so here with Hadland; nor in the Grainger, where Hamish Milne's generous Chandos performance has almost concerto-like balance. Brantelid is certainly virtuoso – try the cadenza-like passages and, indeed, the *Allegro* finale of the Sonata in general. He also finds a lovely colour for his instrument as it imitates the Halling-style fiddle leading the dance. But he never swamps the essential melodic simplicity of the music with misleadingly compensatory colour. Hugely recommended – and don't ignore the *Andante con moto*, an orphaned movement from an abandoned Piano Trio.

**Mike Ashman**

*Grieg – selected comparison:*

*Mørk, Thibaudet (10/94<sup>8</sup>) (VIRG) 349933-2*

*Grainger – selected comparison:*

*Orton, Milne (AI/99) (CHAN) CHAN9746*

## Handel

'Handel in the Wind'

Suite from The Messiah. Rinaldo – Lascia ch'io pianga. Trio Sonata, Op 2 No 4 HWV388. The Harmonious Blacksmith Variations, HWV430. Largo and Passacaglia in G minor. Zadok the Red Priest. Aria amorosa

**Red Priest**

Red Priest © RPO12 (72' • DDD)



'This is a disc that arguably should never have been made.'

That's Red Priest

themselves writing in the booklet accompanying their latest assault on decorum, in which they reduce Handel's masterpiece to a series of dad jokes, gratuitous virtuoso displays and outrageous anachronisms. The worst part is that it's actually quite brilliant.

Reluctantly taking up cellist Angela East's desire to assemble an instrumental suite from key parts of *Messiah*, the rest of the band proceeded to abandon any pretence to propriety by including snippets of swing, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Jaws* and Monty Python's *Life of Brian*. And this being Extreme Baroque, the playing from all concerned, especially from Piers Adams on a variety of recorders from soprano to bass, is showy in the extreme (try, for example, 'The Recorder Shall Sound'). To be fair, Adams isn't just a naughty boy and there are lovely moments such as Handel's *Eternal Source of Light Divine*, which takes us from the ridiculous to the sublime. But *Suite from The Messiah* really is just a good old-fashioned musical bash.

Which makes the 'serious' half of the recording to follow even more satisfying. 'Lascia ch'io pianga', lavishly ornamented and without a recorder in sight, is glorious, while the two sets of variations contain some of the most extraordinary instrumental playing you're likely to hear. But this wouldn't be a Red Priest recording without the joker up the sleeve produced at the end: *Zadok the Red Priest*, where 'Zadok the Priest and the Queen of Sheba become unlikely but fervent lovers'. What can you say to that? **William Yeoman**

## Janáček • Martinů

**Janáček** String Quartets – No 1, 'The

Kreutzer Sonata'; No 2, 'Intimate Letters'

**Martinů** String Quartet No 3, H183

**Doric Quartet**

Chandos © CHAN10848 (59' • DDD)





The Doric Quartet: emphasising the narrative elements in their striking new recording of Janáček and Martinů on Chandos



Janáček's two string quartets are now classics, lending themselves to different

interpretations, of which these by the admirable Doric Quartet are very striking. Essentially, they seem concerned with the narrative elements – the grim little Tolstoy story in No 1, the composer's devotion to Kamila Stösslová in No 2 – but no less with exploiting the astonishing range of expressive colour that Janáček found in the medium. So the viola's answering phrase to the bold opening chords of No 2, marked to be played *pianissimo* and *sul ponticello*, has a refined, barely audible eeriness; and later in the work, when Janáček writes a cluster of notes that are not really a chord, just a noise, very loudly *sul ponticello*, they are not afraid to make it fierce and almost toneless.

Such effects, in both works, are fascinating as an exploration of string quartet colour. But the players are equally capable, in No 2, of a gentle, almost private, self-communing lilt at the start of the *Moderato*, and in No 1 of using very liberal *rubato*, which has the vivid effect of

sketching the wayward, irresponsible nature of the seducer. Again, the marking *flautando*, the slender, fluting tone produced usually over the fingerboard, is properly spooky; and when Janáček marks *furioso*, they certainly let us have it. These are virtuoso performances in every sense, except that of the merely show-off.

The total timing of the two quartets at about 47 minutes is a perennial problem for record programmers. The Chandos solution is to add Martinů's Third Quartet, a skilfully fashioned, lightweight piece dating from his Paris years in the 1920s, which rather tends to expose its thinness beside Janáček's masterpieces.

John Warrack

## La Borde · Rameau

Forqueray La Laborde La Borde Recueils de chansons – excs Petrini Harp Sonata No 3

Rameau Deuxième Concert

Maillys de Villoutreys sop Trio Dauphine

Evidence Ⓢ EVCD008 (72' • DDD)



Jean Benjamin de La Borde (1734-94) – France's own Charles Burney – composed

three beguiling collections of accompanied songs few of us have heard. The 13 ravishly sung here by the soprano Maillys de Villoutreys, sympathetically accompanied by Trio Dauphine – together with Petrini's Sonata for harp (dedicated to a Mlle de La Borde), charmingly performed by Clara Izambert – should encourage an appetite for more recordings of music from the Louis XVI era.

La Borde, who lost his head in the closing days of the French Revolution, is best known today for his four-volume *Essai* on music (1780). His chansons are small-scale *musique de chambre*, requiring the services of a skilled vocalist, violinist, harpist and harpsichordist. La Borde cast the violinist in the role of a second soprano and combined harp with harpsichord to produce a lively, resonant yet delicate accompaniment. His tunes are characterised by expressive upward intervals, such as the octaves in the lullaby 'Dors, dors', and sinuous diminutions as in 'Lugubre nuit'. The rapport between singer and instrumentalists is always collaborative, and the beautifully shaped solo instrumental introductions and interludes, obligatos and ornamentation enhance the exquisite pleasure of the music.

The Rameau and Forqueray items, chosen because of their connections with



## Works for Solo Cello by Duport, Piatti, Popper

Antonio Meneses, cello

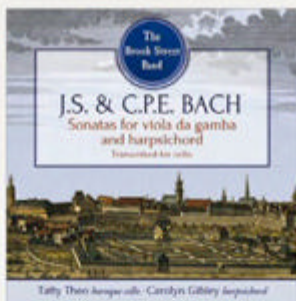


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## J.S. and C.P.E. Bach Sonatas for viola da gamba

Tatty Theo, baroque cello  
Carolyn Gibley, harpsichord



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Tatty Theo and Carolyn Gibley, founder-cellist and harpsichordist of The Brook Street Band, perform the Sonatas for viola da gamba by J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, the first recording of these works to use a baroque cello.

## Cello Sonatas by Enescu, Prokofiev, Shostakovich

Laura Buruiana, cello  
Alexandra Silocea, piano



AV 2302

Fellow-Romanians Laura Buruiana and Alexandra Silocea perform two Russian staples of the repertory – the Sonatas of Prokofiev and Shostakovich – alongside the rare and recently re-discovered one-movement Sonata in F minor by Enescu.

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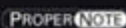
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<http://www.musicweb-international.com>

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the La Borde family, belong to the Louis XV era and date from the 1740s. Marie van Rhijn performs Forqueray's *La Laborde* with exceptional introspection. Possibly more contentious is Trio Dauphine's arrangement of the Rameau *Concert*, which alters the essential balance between the players, turning a work for harpsichord and two *concertante* instruments into a work for solo violin and sumptuous plucked instrumental accompaniment.

Provocative? *Mais oui!* Pleasurable? *Bien sûr!* **Julie Anne Sadie**

## Liszt

Duo Sonata (sur des thèmes polonais), S127. Epithalam zu Eduard Reményi's Vermählungsfeier, S129. Die drei Zigeuner, S383. Elegies – No 1, S130ter; No 2, S131bis. Valse-Improptu, S213. Grand duo concertant sur la Romance de M Lafont 'Le marin', S128 **Voytek Proniewicz** *vn* **Wojciech Waleczek** *pf* Naxos © 8 573145 (70' • DDD)



Not many readers, even those of us who worship at the shrine of Franz Liszt, will

have encountered these works before. The Duo Sonata (22'04"), the manuscript of which only came to light in the late 1950s, is basically a four-movement series of treatments and variations on Chopin's Mazurka in C sharp minor, Op 6 No 2. It's a most appealing work, even if the last of the four movements is a let-down after the third (*Allegretto*). (Keith Anderson, Naxos's excellent in-house booklet writer, misdates the work to 1832-35; it has been shown that a folk theme within the body of the sonata proves Liszt could not have written it till 14 years later.) The *Grand duo concertant sur la Romance de M Lafont 'Le marin'* was based on one of many such romances by the French violinist Charles Philippe Lafont (1781-1839), hand-crafted to entertain the Parisian audiences of the 1830s. As you would expect, in both works the pianist is kept pretty busy. Wojciech Waleczek gives every indication of enjoying the challenges. Here and in the paraphrase of Liszt's own setting of Lenau's poem 'Die drei Zigeuner' ('The Three Gypsies'), a kind of violinistic appendage to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* for piano solo, the pinpoint ensemble and dynamic shading of this duo is exemplary.

Three later works – the *Epithalamium for the Wedding Celebration of Eduard Reményi* (Liszt's violinist friend and fellow countryman), written in 1872, and the two Elegies (1876 and 1878) – are less animated

but no less attractive. This interesting and valuable programme also includes Jenő Hubay's transcription of the *Valse-Improptu* (dedicated to Yehudi Menuhin), in a performance and recorded sound that are superior to Ferenc Szecsődi and István Kassai on Hungaraton. The relatively small amount of chamber music that Liszt did write turns up infrequently on disc. This one, with its two fine protagonists, might encourage others to explore these gems from his seemingly bottomless treasure chest. **Jeremy Nicholas**

*Valse-Improptu – selected comparison:*  
Szecsődi, Kassai (HUNG) HCD32549

## Mendelssohn • Mozart

**Mendelssohn** String Quartet No 2, Op 13

**Mozart** String Quartet No 15, K421

**Chiaroscuro Quartet**

Aparté © AP92 (58' • DDD)



There is no doubt that there is the sort of energy on this disc, particularly in

the Mendelssohn, that is hard to find anywhere else. Although the speeds are sprightly, they are neither too fast nor injected with a synthetic energy, but rather in keeping with the authenticity of performance practice that underpins the Chiaroscuro Quartet's musical integrity. They play on gut strings tuned to a lower pitch than the standard modern concert pitch of A=440, and this ensemble is without a doubt a trailblazer for the authentic performance of High Classical chamber music.

It is excitingly difficult to attune the ear to their unique sound, and the process of doing so allows listeners to accustom themselves to a strangely eerie sound world that is as rich and varied in colour as any ensemble chasing a warmer, more romantic identity. Every harmony is heightened, every voice within the beautifully blended corporate whole given a more distinctive edge. There is, though, a jitteriness in some of the Mozart that comes across less as a hazard of the historical performance and more as a simple unevenness of line. It is disquieting in the *Andante* in particular, because the lack of contrast between the simple sweetness and troublesome greyness that are unmistakably written into the score impoverishes the movement (and some of the quartet as a whole) of its Haydn-esque character and consequent delightful frustration of structural norms. None of that, though, is evident in the performance of the Mendelssohn, which brings out with

crystal clarity its Beethovenian influences and is as electric as it is elegant. **Caroline Gill**

## Messiaen

*Quatuor pour la fin du temps.*

*Fantaisie. Thème et variations*

**Ensemble Nordlys**

Danacord © DACOD756 (66' • DDD)



This issue contains a genuine rarity – Messiaen's 1933 violin-and-piano

*Fantaisie* – already fully characteristic of his earlier manner, yet unpublished until 2007.

Ensemble Nordlys give a deeply considered performance of the Quartet. They pay close attention to the composer's indications of tempo and dynamics, and play with concentrated commitment. In the opening 'Liturgie de cristal', Viktor Wennesz gives the leading clarinet part a sense of spontaneous flow. And Øystein Sonstad sustains the slow cello line of the 'Louange à l'éternité de Jésus' with admirable control and imagination. There are several further high points in the interpretation but I was continually disturbed by problems of balance. Messiaen doesn't always make it easy – there's a moment in the seventh movement, for instance, where the piano's right-hand melody is marked *forte* while the left hand is *piano* and the other three instruments are marked *pianissimo*, and are almost obscured in this recording. However, performers and engineers have on other recordings been able to show such dynamic gradations while enabling each voice to make its effect, as on the 1976 recording by Gawriloff, Deinzer, Palm and Kontarsky.

On this issue, even when there's a single dynamic for all the players, it's generally the piano that comes over as too forceful while the strings lack presence. The question arises even in the *Thème et variations* for violin and piano: when the original melody returns in slow motion, the thunderous piano chords overpower the violin's high *sostenuto*. For me, these problems crucially undermine the undoubted qualities of the performances.

**Duncan Druce**

*Quatuor – selected comparison:*

Gawriloff, Deinzer, Palm, Kontarsky

(8/79<sup>e</sup>, 12/87<sup>e</sup>) (EMI) 747463-8

## Pleyel

'Hidden Gems, Vol 1'

String Quartets – Ben359; Ben360; Ben361

**Ignaz Pleyel Quartet**

Ars Produktion © ARS38 166 (53' • DDD/DSD)

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This bodes well:  
'Hidden Gems, Vol 1'.  
Ignaz Joseph Pleyel is  
a name more

remembered for his piano firm than for his compositions, but that – as with so many also-rans in musical history – is not entirely just. Born a year after Beethoven, he studied with Vanhal and then Haydn, who regarded him as his finest student. In his own lifetime Pleyel enjoyed wild popularity, especially for his string quartets, and it's not difficult to hear why: charm may be looked upon dubiously these days but these pieces burrow their way into your affection in a most beguiling manner. He learnt much from Haydn – not least in the equality between the instruments and a taste for unexpected harmonic escapades.

The three quartets here, all premiere recordings, date from 1792 and are cast in three movements. Musically there's much to delight: the touching theme of the *Adagio* of the F major Quartet, Ben359, for instance, or the same quartet's variation-form finale, in which the lilting theme is developed with great imagination. Another highlight is the slow movement of Ben360, which is duly relished here, though I did wonder if it would have sounded even more striking at a slightly faster pace. Pacing bothered me elsewhere, too, not least in the opening *Allegro affettuoso* of the D major Quartet, Ben361, which seems a touch staid, and the same quartet's *Adagio*, which sounds over-romanticised to these ears. But the finales of both come off very convincingly.

Such music would wilt in indifferent hands but the Ignaz Pleyel Quartet are fervent and warm advocates, and the release is rounded out by a fascinating booklet essay. Let's hope there's more to come.

Harriet Smith

## Prokofiev · Shostakovich · Weill

**Prokofiev** *Visions fugitives*, Op 22  
(arr Derevianko) **Shostakovich** *Preludes*, Op 34  
– excs (arr Tsyganov) **Weill** *Seven Pieces* from  
The Threepenny Opera (arr Frenkel)

**Benjamin Schmid** *vn* **Lisa Smirnova** *pf*  
Online © ODE1253-2 (54' • DDD)



A star in his native  
Austria, Benjamin  
Schmid has never been  
a conventional

virtuoso. His discography tends to avoid the standard classics and I imagine not every listener will respond positively to this thoroughly unorthodox recital, in which nothing is quite as its composer intended. What cannot be denied is the passionate engagement of the soloist, a big-toned player close-miked so that we hear every sharp intake of breath and accompanimental hum. Pianist Lisa Smirnova tends to be relegated to her own ambient pool.

Dispensing with the *n*th degree of refinement, the duo seem perfectly acclimatised to Shostakovich's capricious idiom. The composer himself endorsed the arrangements by Dmitri Tsyganov (1903-92): 'When listening to this transcription I forgot that I wrote these preludes for the piano as they now suit the violin so well.'

By contrast, if you buy into the softer-grained conception of Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives* peddled by Anna Gourari (ECM, 2/15), you will find these reimagined versions hard to take. They're certainly more distractingly interventionist than Rudolf Barshai's transmogrifications for full string band. Arranger Viktor Derevianko did a terrific job with his reduction of Shostakovich's Fifteenth Symphony (DG, 12/05) but the present Prokofiev treatments work less well. Try the *Molto giocoso* (tr 19), a tiny efflorescence essentially preserved as a piano solo to which *pizzicato* persiflage and semi-audible scrubbing add little. Sniffing apart, *Con eleganza* (tr 20) keeps things simple and demonstrates Schmid's marvellously full tone even in stratospheric realms. Elsewhere a harsher declamatory manner is adopted at the expense of absolute purity of intonation.

Weill's familiar numbers are presented in a violin-and-piano sequence by Stefan Frenkel (1902-79), effective enough in its own extrovert fashion. Schmid, an accomplished jazz musician, is predictably brilliant and characterful. At times he seems intent on restoring the astringency of Weill's original inspiration; the concluding 'Cannon Song' is almost coarse. Elsewhere he might just be guying his own passionate temperament. This long-gestated project has a dangerous exuberance all its own. **David Gutman**

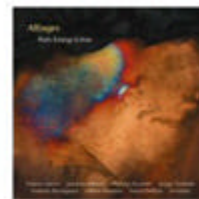
## Rosing-Schow

'Alliages'

Nanu. Lines. Alliance – I; II; ...aus atmen...  
Three Simple Songs. Ritus I

**Helene Gjerris** *mez* **Hélène Navasse**,  
**Svend Melbye** *fls* **Jeanette Balland** *sax*  
**Asbjørn Nørgaard** *va* **Jesper Sivebæk** *gtr*

**Andreas Borregaard** *acco* **Mathias Reumert** *perc*  
Dacapo © 8 226580 (61' • DDD)



Although his music  
has been little heard in  
the UK, Niels Rosing-  
Schow (b1954) is a

leading voice in Danish new music. This disc of his chamber output features works from the past six years, the exception being *Ritus I* (1991), in which flute and percussion outline then explore the properties of a raga in ever more combative terms. Of the remaining items, *Nanu* draws upon Greenlandic folklore in its tensile interplay, with the two *Alliages* pieces (seemingly written in reverse order) are abstract if by no means inscrutable studies in an alloy-like fusion of contrasting timbres, and in which the highly arresting sonority of the accordion is uppermost in each case.

Perhaps the two most engrossing pieces are *Lines*, essentially a sonatina for the guitar whose three movements each posit a literary premise without disclosing any more concrete details than are conveyed by its title, and *Three Simple Songs*. The latter comprises settings for voice and guitar of deceptively unassuming texts whose deeper implications are elegantly touched upon here. The most recent work, ...*aus atmen...*, was conceived as a test piece for the Carl Nielsen International Flute Competition and can stand with classics of its repertoire by such as Debussy and Varèse as music transcending its pragmatic origin. Committed performances, as one might expect from this crop of the leading Danish musicians, and unexceptionally fine sound enhance the attractions of a release that certainly makes a representative introduction to another composer of note within the Danish (as indeed Scandinavian) musical firmament. **Richard Whitehouse**

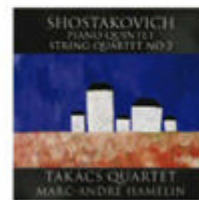
## Shostakovich

String Quartet No 2, Op 68.

Piano Quintet, Op 57<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>**Marc-André Hamelin** *pf* **Takács Quartet**

Hyperion © CDA67987 (70' • DDD)



This is the second  
joint release from  
Marc-André Hamelin  
and the Takács

Quartet. Last time it was in Schumann's Quintet (11/09); that by Shostakovich is a rather different proposition, though of course the pianist has made an outstanding recording of the concertos (1/04).

Hamelin is suitably edgy in the opening piano soliloquy, suggesting an underlying angst which is more subtly rendered by Argerich yet higher in voltage than the rival Hyperion recording led by pianist Igor Uryash. As the work unfolds, you're very aware that the relationship between pianist and string quartet is one of dialogue, whereas in the Argerich EMI version it's more of a power struggle between her and cellist Mischa Maisky, whose vibrato is as lavish as ever. The fugal second movement is full of rich colours in the hands of Argerich et al but is even more eloquently wrought by the strings of the Takács, while in the *Scherzo* the earlier Hyperion version sounds somewhat loose-limbed compared to the energy here, Hamelin making light of the devilish passagework. The effect is more refined than in Argerich's account, though I find the brash energy of the latter electrifying. It's perhaps in the *Intermezzo* that the new disc scores most highly, exquisitely withdrawn, while in the finale the ambiguity of mood is well captured, with its combination of tension and insouciance.

Compared to the Emerson's Award-winning set, the Takács find more to smile about in the Second Quartet, introducing a hint of playfulness into the opening. Throughout they bring great clarity and a subtle range of colour but I wanted something more dolorous in the slow movement, where the Emersons (and even more so the Borodins) are spine-tingling. And in the third-movement Waltz, the Takács don't quite attain the hint of hysteria of the finest groups, though again the balance is unfailingly finely considered, and they're beautifully recorded. There's a disconcerting moment, however, at 0'45" in the final track, where the cello is distinctly out of tune. **Harriet Smith**

*Stg Qt No 2 – selected comparisons:*

*Emerson Qt (6/00<sup>8</sup>) (DG) 475 7407DC5*

*Borodin Qt (CHAN) CHAN10064*

*Pf Qt – selected comparisons:*

*Uryash, St Petersburg Qt (11/04) (HYPE) CDA67158*

*Argerich, R Capuçon, Margulis, Chen, Maisky*

(11/07) (EMI) 504504-2

## Stockhausen

### Mantra

**Mark Knoop, Roderick Chadwick** *pfs*

**Newton Armstrong** *elec*s

hat[now]ART © HATN190 (69' • DDD)



I didn't much care for the version of Stockhausen's *Mantra* that Xenia Pestova,

Pascal Meyer and Jan Panis issued via Naxos in 2010. True enough, *Mantra* is a sound world away from the granular snarl of Stockhausen's epoch-defined pieces of 1950s modernism; but this *Mantra* felt too self-consciously pretty in a field dominated still by the Kontarsky brothers' premiere recording (DG, 7/72 – nla).

Recorded at Kings Place, the concert hall which nestles under *The Guardian's* HQ in central London, pianists Mark Knoop and Roderick Chadwick, with Newton Armstrong managing the electronics, give us a modern version that is a real contender. The Naxos version suffered from a narrow bandwidth of dynamics; here the opening woodblock crack, with its accompanying brouhaha of piano turbulence, hits you between the eyes. Right from the get-go, the performance has a confidence that feels right and proper.

*Mantra*, written in 1970, finds Stockhausen at a point of transition. Behind him lay all those early responses to serialism – *Gruppen*, *Kontakte*, *Refrain* etc; ahead was *Licht*, his vast and wacky opera cycle, pinned around a network of melodic formulas, an idea about controlling musical material that had its roots in *Mantra*. As Stockhausen relished explaining, *Mantra* is underwritten by a 13-note formula that governs every parameter of his composition; but this isn't Boulez's *Structures*. The formula permeates at different speeds and rates; at the most subterranean level, the 13 notes transform electronically, the arrival of each new note heralding a new section.

In the moment of experiencing *Mantra*, you ought to be aware of this underlying arithmetic as consciously as you tick off the modulations during a Mahler symphony; the sounds are set in motion by Stockhausen's formula but the music lies elsewhere. And this trio succeed precisely where that overly bureaucratic Naxos version falls down. The playing cuts through with knockout physicality; the sense that you are been shown multiple sides of an object that is perpetually evolving, spinning in and out of control, is secure.

**Philip Clark**

*Selected comparison:*

*Pestova/Meyer Pf Duo, Panis (1/11) (NAXO) 8 572398*

## Taneyev

'The Complete Quintets'

String Quintets – Op 14<sup>a</sup>; Op 16<sup>b</sup>.

Piano Quintet, Op 30<sup>c</sup>

**Martinů Quartet** with <sup>b</sup>Jitka Hosprová *va*

<sup>a</sup>Jiří Bárta *vc* <sup>c</sup>Olga Vinokur *pf*

Supraphon © ② SU4176-2 (125' • DDD)



Taneyev was one of the few people from whom his teacher

Tchaikovsky would

tolerate criticism, though Taneyev himself regretted that his own music was so often compared with Brahms's. Yet it is indeed by way of Brahms that the Piano Quintet is best approached, in the majestic sweep of its form but also for the robust craftsmanship to which Taneyev paid such attention. The first movement, lasting some 20 minutes out of the total 45, is certainly not short of ideas, but they are ordered so well, with such an absorbing flow of development, that it does not seem unduly extended. The music needs this expansiveness; and the ensuing *Scherzo* is suitably spirit-lifting, closer to Tchaikovsky in its lightness and sparkle than to a Brahmsian *scherzo*. The passacaglia paces along steadily in a well-chosen tempo – the artists have an exceptional understanding of all that Taneyev is doing – and the finale is marked by, among other things, a liking for turning aside to beguiling episodes rather than storming to a conclusion.

It is a very appealing work, sensitively understood and played here, as are the two string quintets. These are smaller pieces, the C major work (Op 16) with another delightful *scherzo*, with Tchaikovsky this time the father figure in the delightful play with dance elements. The G major Quintet (Op 14) again has a long, but justifiably long, opening movement, and a finale whose disparate ideas only really cohere because Taneyev took such technical trouble to make them do so. **John Warrack**

## Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch

**Arensky** Piano Trio No 1, Op 32 **Mussorgsky** Une

*larme* (arr Krein) **Rachmaninov** Trio élégiaque

No 1 **Shostakovich** Piano Trio No 2, Op 67

**Trio Shaham Erez Wallfisch**

Nimbus © NI5917 (75' • DDD)



Ever since Glinka's *Trio pathétique* of 1832, Russian composers have associated the

piano trio with elegy, among them Arensky for the cellist Karl Davydov, Tchaikovsky for Nikolay Rubinstein, Rachmaninov twice (including once for Tchaikovsky), Shostakovich for his friend Ivan Sollertinsky. Three of these works are represented here. Rachmaninov's First, though not for Tchaikovsky, nevertheless





The Martinů Quartet, joined by Jitka Hosprová, Jiří Bárta and Olga Vinokur for Tanyev quintets on Supraphon

has beautiful, long-drawn melodies he might well have admired, though they are rather smothered under the rich piano textures, a problem in much of Rachmaninov, however skilfully the balance is managed here. Arensky's own melodic gift is well brought out in his grieving, eloquently played *Adagio* for Davydov, and the players tackle the lively if somewhat repetitious *Scherzo* with great spirit.

In the absence of Tchaikovsky here, it can safely be said that the masterpiece is Shostakovich's remarkable work of 1944, mourning not only his friend but more widely the Jewish people – knowledge of the death camps was only then just reaching Moscow. The difficult opening, with eerie high notes on the cello, is beautifully managed, with the ambiguous *Scherzo* brilliant but sinister. The pace is properly steady to allow the chaconne full expression; and with the finale, the ostensibly happy strumming of a Jewish klezmer band is made to sound dark and maimed. The dignified close, in this impassioned, thoughtful performance, is controlled and expressive, with a closing mood of, if not peacefulness, at least resignation. The final addition to the recital of Mussorgsky's late piano piece

'Une larme' may seem a neat programme idea but cannot help being an anticlimax.

**John Warrack**

### 'The Neo-Classical Trumpet'

**Fauré** *Masques et bergamasques*, Op 112

**W Leigh** *A Midsummer Night's Dream - Suite*

**Martinů** *Sonatina*, H357 **Respighi** *The Birds*

**Stenhammar** *The Song*, Op 44 - Interlude

**Stravinsky** *Pulcinella Suite*

**Jonathan Freeman-Attwood** *tp*

**Daniel-Ben Pienaar** *pf*

Linn © CKD448 (66' • DDD)



As exciting album titles go – 'Hot Rats', 'The Black Saint and The Sinner Lady' or 'The Kinks Kontroversy' – 'The Neo-Classical Trumpet' hardly charts; the playing, though, is very rock'n'roll. Trumpeter (and *Gramophone* contributor) Jonathan Freeman-Attwood and pianist Daniel-Ben Pienaar have form when it comes to reimagining music from the past for their duo. As Freeman-Attwood explains, their earlier disc 'Romantic Trumpet Sonatas' (6/11) began by posing the question: what music might

Mendelssohn, Schumann et al have written had ocean-going Steinway grands and modern chromatic trumpets been available to them? This new album pursues that same question into the early 20th century.

The centrepiece of 'The Neo-Classical Trumpet' is a devilishly astute reworking of Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* Suite, a piece I can normally take or leave, which now I can hear through fresh ears. Freeman-Attwood's clean, well-behaved trumpet sound embraces a dizzying palette of colours; the wrong-note buffoonery of the *Vivo* finds him cultivating a well-rounded rasp; in the finale, a *bel canto* tone is luminous and generous. The base colour of trumpet and piano also helps nail *Pulcinella*'s Baroque roots, the modern trumpet invoking the brilliant shine of its naturally tuned Baroque counterpart.

Elsewhere, Fauré's *Masques et bergamasques* and Respighi's *Gli uccelli* fit seamlessly into the concept; Stenhammar's lullaby-tinged *Sången* is a beautiful thing indeed; although, sadly, I remained unmoved by the charms of British composer Walter Leigh's rather generic *A Midsummer Night's Dream Suite*. But Bohuslav Martinů's small-scale *Sonatina* (1956) is melodically demonstrative and



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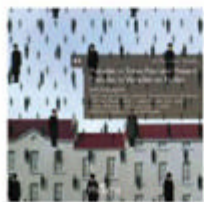


unafraid to wander off neo-classical message, giving Freeman-Attwood and Pienaar plenty to ponder: as so often in this context, a piece by Martinů punches above its weight. **Philip Clark**

## 'Preludes in Times Past and Present'

**Blei** Vorspiel (zu einem Abschied) **Blumenbach** Preludium **Brühl** Atlas-Ouvertüre **Dudevant** En plein Pacifique – Prelude **Grazlinger** Preludium **Herzung** Die Abenteuer von der berühmigten Ruprecht – Prelude **Hrabal** Předešlá **I Knight** Prelude **Monfort** Prélude des Princesses Tulipe et Petit Lys **Sabaté** Preludio **Sampoeschtian** Prélude-caprice **Sanda** Hudbě z lesa – Prelude **Sauvage** Prélude (Temps résolu) **Sechter** Prelude **Séraphin** Prélude (en forme de pavane) **Sinding** Ouverture til ekteskapet **Tolkowsky** Fantaisie-Prélude **deCompagnie**

Phaedra © PH92083 (69' • DDD)



Rarely is a disc so blissfully unconcerned with accounting for itself in the

marketplace. While 'Preludes in Times Past and Present' has no great quality deficits – it's extremely well played and the music is largely agreeable – why would anyone issue a series of short preludes by mostly unknown 18th- to 20th-century composers, all pieces being around three minutes in length, in a disc that's in a constant state of beginning? One could hope for some unanticipated overall fusion, but such redemption isn't forthcoming.

The disc begins with a promising cello flourish in Herzung's Prelude to the monodrama *The Adventures of Infamous Ruprecht*, which then suddenly ends after some elfin activity, leaving you wondering if the title is longer than the piece. Tolkowsky's *Fantaisie-Prélude* sounds like a piano concerto that's about to blossom, but ends in less than four minutes. Sinding's *Marriage Overture* has some nice dance music for trombone – for more than two minutes. Séraphin's *Prélude (en forme de pavane)* could be a slow movement by Fauré. The booklet-notes say that Sauvage was a mystic of sorts, though his *Prélude* could be one of Messiaen's with its dreamy, spare piano and long-held violin notes. Sabaté's *Preludio* for violin and piano could pass for Hungarian restaurant music before it suddenly gets interesting with some fun *glissando* activity.

But then, Phaedra Classics hardly has a conventional discography. Its 'In Flanders Fields' series (of which this disc is Vol 83)

has offbeat items such as 'Windows on the Bass Clarinet'. An earnest though anything-goes label? Too bad the recording quality is so distantly miked: what already seems like a distant musical world becomes even more so.

David Patrick Stearns

## 'Sea Eagle'

**Barry** Jabberwocky<sup>a</sup> **PM Davies** Sea Eagle **Holloway** Horn Trio<sup>b</sup> **C Matthews** Three of a Kind<sup>c</sup> **D Matthews** Horn Quintet<sup>d</sup> **Turnage** Cello Concerto – Prayer for a Great Man<sup>e</sup> **H Watkins** Trio<sup>f</sup>

**Richard Watkins** <sup>hn</sup> with <sup>a</sup>**Mark Padmore** <sup>ten</sup>

<sup>f</sup>**Laura Samuel** <sup>vn</sup> <sup>bce</sup>**Paul Watkins** <sup>vc</sup>

<sup>abc</sup>**Huw Watkins** <sup>pf</sup> <sup>d</sup>**Nash Ensemble**

NMC © NMCD203 (75' • DDD)

<sup>e</sup>Recorded live at Wigmore Hall, London,

October 18, 2014



During a prestigious career stretching back to 1981, the horn player Richard

Watkins has held posts with the Fires of London, London Sinfonietta and Philharmonia; he is currently a member of the Nash Ensemble and a founder member of London Winds. NMC's enterprising and thoroughly absorbing sequence shows him to be an imperious exponent of his craft and a wonderfully instinctive musician to boot.

Sir Peter Maxwell Davies wrote *Sea Eagle* (a solo 'study' in three movements) for Watkins in 1982, and the dedicatee's performance compels in its consummate technical mastery and penetrating poetic scope. Next, Watkins teams up with tenor Mark Padmore and composer/pianist Huw Watkins (no relation!) for an arresting reading of Gerald Barry's enjoyably hallucinatory *Jabberwocky* (2012). Huw's cellist brother, Paul, features in three items: both Colin Matthews's lucid and rewarding *Three of a Kind* and Robin Holloway's comparably nourishing 2010-11 Trio for horn, cello and piano were written expressly for this ad hoc ensemble of namesakes, while Mark-Anthony Turnage's sincerely felt *Prayer for a Great Man* is a straight lifting of a movement from his 2010 Cello Concerto (the scoring is for horn and cello alone). Composed for the Nash Ensemble in 2010, David Matthews's Quintet for horn and string quartet has tumbling fantasy and lyrical grace in abundance. Last, but definitely not least, Huw Watkins's own shrewdly paced and keenly proportioned 2009 Trio for horn, violin and piano strikes me as a real find;

violinist Laura Samuel makes an excellent showing here.

With detailed booklet-notes and pleasing sound emanating from no fewer than four different venues, this is a most valuable collection in every respect. **Andrew Achenbach**

## 'UK DK'

**Arnold** Recorder Sonatina, Op 41

**Borup-Jørgensen** Fantasia, Op 75 **Britten** Alpine

Suite **Christiansen** It is spring, Op 56 **Holmboe**

Sonata, Op 145 **Jacob** Sonatina. An Encore for

Michala **Kidane** Tourbillon

**Michala Petri** <sup>rec</sup> **Mahan Esfahani** <sup>hpd</sup>

OUR Recordings © 6 220611 (66' • DDD/DSD)



This is not the first time Michala Petri has juxtaposed recorder works from Britain

and her home country, Denmark. A quarter of a century ago she combined solos, duos and trios – with other Petri family members (RCA, 5/89, long out of print) – by Arnold, Asger Christiansen, Holmboe, others from Germany and Norway, plus the wonderful Sonatina Gordon Jacob wrote for her in 1983, also included here. None of the other works has been repeated from that earlier disc and of the composers only Britten did not write specifically for her.

Although Malcolm Arnold wrote several pieces for Petri, ironically she and Esfahani play the engaging Sonatina (1962, with piano accompaniment originally). As with Britten's *Alpine Suite* (1955), written as a recorder trio for an injured friend on a skiing holiday but given here in an arrangement by the performers, this is lighter music emphasising the recorder's brightness. It is the Jacob Sonatina that hints at greater depth, while Henning Christiansen's charming vernal diptych avoids the inconsequentiality of the Britten. Daniel Kidane (*b*1986) and Axel Borup-Jørgensen take the instrument into a different tonal dimension. Kidane's horological fantasia *Tourbillon* – commissioned for this CD – was written to a requirement for 'a very exciting and demanding piece' and pushes boundaries very differently to Borup-Jørgensen's more radical Fantasia (1988).

The warm heart of this superbly played programme is the Sonata (1980) by Holmboe, who, like Arnold and Jacob, wrote several works for Petri. Like all late Holmboe, light and peace are the pervading features of the three movements. A wonderful advert for this instrumental pairing and for virtuosity in general. Superbly engineered sound. **Guy Rickards**





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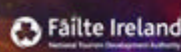
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## MUSIC BY WOMEN COMPOSERS

In the wake of International Women's Day, **Arnold Whittall** listens to six new discs featuring female composers from around the world



The Momenta Quartet feature in Navona's recording of Heidi Jacob's String Quartet, composed in 2009

With five of these six CDs devoted to single composers, **Seven Sisters** stands out for its range. Ethel Smyth's Cello Sonata (1887) is the high point: while not especially original, it has many accomplished and imaginative qualities, with a particularly effective finale. At the other stylistic extreme, Madeleine Dring's Trio for flute, oboe and piano (1968) might sound at times like the best work that Poulenc never wrote but it shapes its material elegantly, with abundant wit and charm.

Pianist Diana Ambache and her expert team make this programme a pleasing experience, while avoiding the darker, more progressive aspects other composers provide – none more consistently than **Brigitta Muntendorf** (b1962). German-born, Muntendorf works within that potent seam of expressionistic modernism favoured by her teacher Rebecca Saunders; and the five pieces included here, all written between 2010 and 2014, tend to move between brittle, febrile textures and insistently rhythmic, sometimes even dance-like episodes. With specialist performers and superior packaging (though there's no text for the one vocal piece) this is a worthy addition to Col Legno's Siemens Foundation series.

**Liza Lim** (b1966) is now based in Britain but she was born in Australia and three imposing orchestral works from 2006–10 highlight her intensive engagement

with Aboriginal culture. The use of the didjeridu in *The Compass* is an example of this, while *The Guest*, with its references to the Persian mystic poet Rumi, reinforces Lim's broader aspiration to blend a kind of ecstatic expressionism with the evocation of an essentially primitive spirituality. To do this by way of orchestral forces capable of Straussian opulence increases the sense of strain that irradiates the musical fabric in 'on the edge' live performances. *Pearl, Ochre, Hair String* is especially arresting in its refusal to underwrite the settled categories of Western musical traditions. In the end, nevertheless, Lim might achieve more by way of the fined-down sound worlds available with smaller instrumental or vocal ensembles.

It might seem glib to suggest that the predominantly reined-in spirit of the relatively recent works of **Barbara Monk Feldman** (b1953) stems from remembering the music of her late husband. In the String Quartet No 1 (*Desert-scape*) of 2004, there is indeed a meditative eventfulness comparable to Morton Feldman's own idiom. Yet Monk Feldman is less at ease with reticent austerity and this can lead to a kind of dreamy understatedness that, in the solo piano work *Soft Horizons* (2012), risks sounding inconsequential. The more diverse instrumentation of *The Chaco Wilderness* (2005) sketches a magical location in New Mexico while appearing to resist any hint of the sublime in nature, and also retreats from the more sustained

structures that worked so well in the string quartet of the previous year.

**Heidi Jacob** (b1954) is an American composer with much closer stylistic links to European traditions than Monk Feldman. Her forthright expressiveness exposes a multitude of stylistic associations, the music working best when forthrightness promotes economy. *Winter Light* for violin and piano (2012) keeps in check those ruminative tendencies that permeate the String Quartet (2009) and two loosely knit works for solo piano. The disc's most bracing item is *Salome Revisited*, a short tape piece that should persuade all but the most sceptical that Strauss could have been a great composer of music for horror movies.

Having migrated from South America to Europe as a student, **Hilda Paredes** (b1957) has found consistently positive, persuasive ways of connecting quite different modes of musical experience. Darker moods and more fractured musical textures are not excluded but are balanced against exuberance and a lyrical expansiveness that is not confined to her vocal works. The two most substantial scores, *Cuerdas del destino* for string quartet and *Canciones lunáticas* for countertenor and string quartet, display her gift for dramatic characterisation within satisfyingly buoyant formal processes. This disc is something of a family affair – Paredes's husband and stepson, Irvine and Jake Arditti, are prominently involved. But the music and music-making are invigorating and far from merely cosy, with Aeon's high production values an added bonus. **G**

## THE RECORDINGS



**Various Cpsrs** 'Seven Sisters'  
Ambache et al  
Ambache © AMB6005



**Muntendorf** 'It may be all an illusion'  
Various artists  
Col Legno © WWE1CD40411



**Lim** Orch Wks  
Various artists  
hat[now]ART © HATN185



**Monk Feldman** 'Soft Horizons'  
The Down Town Ensemble  
New World © NW80765-2



**H Jacob** 'Beneath Winter Light'  
Govatos, Abramovic, Momenta Qt  
Navona © NV5985



**Paredes** 'Cuerdas del destino'  
Arditti Qt  
Aeon © AECD1439

# Robert Thurston Dart

Edward Breen pays tribute to an early music pioneer – a highly regarded musician, recording artist, musicologist and lecturer who left a legacy that we are still enjoying today

Robert Thurston Dart (1921-71) was one of the great autodidacts of the 20th century. In the days when opportunities for performance or study of pre-Classical music were rare, he – like so many pioneers – travelled his own idiosyncratic route.

A choirboy at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court, Dart caught the attention of the redoubtable Edmund H Fellowes, arguably the leading expert on early English choral music of his time. In the 1930s he sang for the BBC's *Children's Hour* broadcasts and later studied with Arnold Goldsbrough at the Royal College of Music before reading Mathematics at Exeter University. In 1942

he was called to wartime service with the RAF where, post D-Day, he survived crash-landing in a minefield outside Calais. Recuperating in hospital he met the young violinist Neville Marriner, and one of the key musical partnerships of the early music revival was ignited. Dart left the army on the understanding that he would pursue postgraduate statistical research at Cambridge University but instead travelled to Belgium to study with the Flemish musicologist Charles Van den Borren. Returning to England with a dazzling keyboard technique and keen research acumen he worked at Cambridge University when he was appointed a Professor in 1962.

It was during the 1950s that Dart performed most widely. A regular broadcaster for the BBC's Third Programme, with Marriner he both formed the Jacobean Consort and performed in the Boyd Neel Orchestra gaining a reputation as a formidable continuo-player. In 1955, Neel moved to Canada and Dart became Artistic Director. His remodeled ensemble – Philomusica of London – specialized in Baroque repertoire performed from his own editions 'with the utmost attention to authenticity and sonority' and he directed from the harpsichord. During this decade Dart also met the

Australian patron and publisher Louise Dyer for whom he recorded extensively as a soloist and with his Philomusica on her L'Oiseau-Lyre label. It is due to her unflinching support and enthusiasm that so much of Dart's work is preserved on disc. In particular his series 'Masters of Early English Keyboard Music' established him as a soloist of distinction and an expert interpreter of the works of John Bull but it is as a clavichordist that his exquisite sensitivity to

voicing and nuance really shines through, particularly with his album of Froberger (1/62). This was one of Dart's personal favourites and was recorded on Dart's own instrument made by

Thomas Goff. With the Jacobean Ensemble his recording of Purcell's Sonatas of Three Parts (Argo, 8/58) is particularly joyful and quick-witted despite an outdated string tone. Throughout his ensemble recordings he is noted for elaborate and ear-catching continuo realisations, a style now suppressed in favour of austerity.

Alongside this busy performing career Dart's academic star was also ascendant long before his specialism had become established in Britain. He was secretary to Musica Britannica, editing many volumes of early British music; a founding member of the Galpin Society, devoted to the study of old instruments; and a prolific writer. In his book *The*

*Interpretation of Music*, musicology informed performance as he contemplated original performing styles and conditions for much early music. He was not slow to practise what he preached. For example, he commissioned 'Corelli bows' for the Boyd Neel Orchestra and reported to Louise Dyer 'you have never heard string tone like this before. The clarity of articulation, the sweetness of the sound (so gentle, so un-wiry), the precision of the attack, the elegance – all that one had hoped for from 18th-century music, in fact.' However, in 1959 Dart resigned from the orchestra citing exhaustion.

*'He is noted for ear-catching, elaborate continuo realisations, a style now suppressed in favour of austerity'*

## DEFINING MOMENTS

### • 1936 – *Children's Hour*

Master Dart sang a programme of Elizabethan songs for BBC's *Children's Hour* accompanied by the lutenist John Bikendike.

### • 1944 – *Meeting Marriner*

Dart survived a crash-landing in France which injured his wrist. Recuperating in a nursing home he met Neville Marriner and formed a life-long musical partnership.

### • 1945 – *Studies in Brussels*

Studied for a year with the Belgian musicologist Charles Van den Borren in Brussels, after which he was appointed a research assistant to Henry Moule at St John's College, Cambridge.

### • 1955 – *Philomusica of London*

Dart became Artistic Director of the Boyd Neel Orchestra, which he renamed the Philomusica of London. He was encouraged and supported by Louise Dyer.

### • 1964 – *Coming to King's*

Dart was appointed as the first full-time Professor of Music to the University of London. He founded the Faculty of Music at King's College, London and completely rewrote the London syllabus.





During his Cambridge years Dart influenced many important musicians: Christopher Hogwood and David Munrow (whom he famously lent a crumhorn) included. Performing less in the 1960s, Dart devoted himself to education and seized the opportunity to found a new Music Faculty for the University of London, based at King's College, in 1964, where many more young musicians were drawn to his orbit including Michael Nyman, Davitt Moroney and Sir John Eliot Gardiner.

Always leading by example, Dart's later research continually questioned established performance norms, especially in Baroque repertoire. Those new violin bows were just the tip of an iceberg, and he might best be remembered today for his work on the

roots of the *Brandenburg Concertos* which he was recording with Marriner in 1971 when admitted to hospital with stomach cancer. His revolutionary editions (re)assigned the flauti d'echo parts to recorders: a charismatic pairing of David Munrow and John Turner.

Sir Neville Marriner best summed up Thurston Dart's life on BBC radio in 1996 when he reflected: 'Nowadays he would be considered to be a messiah but in those days he was rather considered to be a troublemaker.' Indeed, Dart's work enabled many subsequent developments and his legacy is now with his many distinguished pupils and colleagues who continue to make glorious trouble as they reshape the musical landscape. **G**

#### THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



**Froberger**  
Clavichord Music  
**Thurston Dart**  
clavichord  
BnF Collection ➔

# Instrumental



**Pwyll ap Siôn listens to a new recording of Glass's piano music:**

*'What becomes abundantly clear is Moore's highly developed, intuitive and nuanced approach to this music'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**



**Stephen Plaistow reviews David Fray's Schubert solo and duo disc:**

*'Fray is alive to the way the music moves at every point and skilled at evoking worlds of sound beyond the piano'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**

## Aho

Nineteen Preludes. Three Small Piano Pieces. Two Easy Piano Pieces for Children. Sonatina. Solo II. Piano Sonata

**Sonja Fräki** *pf*

BIS (F) BIS2106 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Kalevi Aho may not be as well known for his solo music as for his orchestral but he

makes his mark in any medium he turns his hand to. His half a dozen piano opuses are here laid out in roughly ascending order of sophistication.

The 19 Preludes of 1965–68 show the talented schoolboy composer trying on various outfits for size, from Bach to Bartók, via Schumann and others. With the *Three Small Piano Pieces* of 1971 – the time of his Third Symphony – richer harmonic colours appear, along with more oblique counterpoint and more adventurous textures, while the *Two Easy Piano Pieces for Children* – part of a set of commissioned pedagogic pieces – pick up on the witty touches of some of the Preludes. Also written for young performers, the Sonatina of 1993 is rather more than *Gebrauchsmusik*, with its run-around Toccata, austere *Andante* and clamorous finale suggesting an affinity with the recently lamented John McCabe.

Much reliant on cluster-based harmony and tremolos, the 11-minute *Solo II* (from 1985, the second of a superb ongoing cycle of *Solos* for various instruments) betrays its origins as a competition piece for the Sibelius Academy, though its athleticism eventually gives way to troubled reflection. The three-movement, 14-minute Sonata of 1980 is altogether more ambitious in its attempted fusion of substance, soundscape and virtuosity – as stretching for the performer as it evidently was for the composer. Sonja Fräki rises to the challenges of the Sonata, as of all the music on the disc, and she supplies an informative and sympathetic booklet essay. **David Fanning**

## Alkan

Capriccio alla soldatesca, Op 50. La chanson de la folle au bord de la mer, Op 31 No 8. Esquisses, Op 63 – No 49, Laus Deo. Marche funèbre, Op 26. Marche triomphale, Op 27. Minuetto alla tedesca, Op 46. Trois petites fantaisies, Op 41. Petits préludes sur les huit gammes du plainchant – No 6, Poco lento. Le tambour bat aux champs, Op 50*bis*

**Vincenzo Maltempo** *pf*

Piano Classics (C) PCL0083 (58' • DDD)



Vol 4 of Vincenzo Maltempo's Alkan consists of works which he considers

better suited to his 1899 Erard instrument than to a modern piano. And in this he adds a special dimension of timbre and colour to music's ultimate bogeyman, previously celebrated on record by Ronald Smith and most notably by Marc-André Hamelin, together with invaluable encounters by Olli Mustonen and Steven Osborne.

Maltempo is once again every inch the virtuoso, brimming over with zest even when Alkan's demands are sufficiently ferocious to cause him momentary strain in the monstrous *Marche triomphale* (only Hamelin could throw off its massive octave challenge with sufficient nonchalance and aplomb). Elsewhere there is much to wonder at in Maltempo's playing of the *Trois petites fantaisies* (with typical Alkan perversity more outsize than petite): crisp and assertive in No 1, furiously paced in the frantically skipping No 2 and madcap Tom-and-Jerry chase of No 3. And whether in the *Capriccio alla soldatesca*, where the soldiers tramp and trumpet their way into battle, in the baleful *Chanson de la folle au bord de la mer* or in Alkan's periodic retreats into a reclusive, hymnal piety, Maltempo is brilliantly attuned to an outsider, bleak and uncompromising beneath his surface extravagance. Piano Classics' sound is excellent and Maltempo proves himself a true champion of the near-impossible. **Bryce Morrison**

## Beethoven

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 4'

Piano Sonatas – No 1, Op 2 No 1; No 6, Op 10 No 2; No 19, Op 49 No 1; No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57

**Jonathan Biss** *pf*

Meyer Media (C) MM15029 (62' • DDD)



The Beethoven sonata cycle that Jonathan Biss launched on Avie now reaches its

halfway mark via Meyer Media with Vol 4, which begins with the First Sonata. Biss takes the opening *Allegro* at a conservative tempo which sounds closer to a square-cut four beats to a bar rather than the hurling *alla breve* two that Pollini, Kovacevich and Schnabel convey. Yet the phrases move forwards and the dynamic surges hold the attention. The peculiar tonal 'ping' distinguishing Biss's articulation and careful observance of rests in the *Adagio* evoke a well-regulated period instrument dressed as a modern concert grand. Both the Minuet and the *Prestissimo* finale are intimately scaled and scrupulously voiced.

By contrast, Biss shapes Op 10 No 2's *Allegro* on a larger scale, with expanded dynamics and intelligently meted-out modifications of the basic pulse. The pianist's well-contoured linear control in the finale generates palpable note-to-note tension that justifies a less than edge-of-the-seat *Presto*.

Heard alongside the *Appassionata* that featured on his EMI Debut recital disc (7/04 – nla), Biss's conception of the *Allegro assai* now appears leaner in tone and more dynamically fastidious. However, I miss some of the earlier version's kinetic abandon (at the turn to the the minor key at bar 51, about 1'55" into the movement, for example). The same holds true for the final movement, especially when you compare the newer, slightly more inhibited coda next to that of the younger firebrand. In the *Andante con moto*, Biss still heightens Var 1's left-hand syncopations by observing the right-hand chords' short note values



accurately but makes Var 2's expressive points through colour and touch rather than *rubato*.

For a download bonus encore, Biss offers as concentrated and committed a performance of the last Op 126 Bagatelle as they come. Superb sound and documentation. **Jed Distler**

## Brahms

'Works for Solo Piano, Vol 4'

Piano Sonata No 1, Op 1. Ballade, 'Edward', Op 10 No 1. Eight Pieces, Op 76 - No 1, Capriccio; No 2, Capriccio; No 6, Intermezzo. Intermezzo, Op 117 No 3. Intermezzo, Op 119 No 2. Variations on a Theme by Paganini, Op 35 - Book 1. Variations on a Theme by Schumann, Op 9

**Barry Douglas** *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10857 (83' • DDD)



Volume 4 in Barry Douglas's Brahms cycle-in-progress mixes and matches

short pieces culled from various opus number groups with three large-scale works. Or, more accurately, two and a half, since we only get Book 1 of the *Paganini* Variations. Here Douglas's measured tempi and sober, meticulous execution offer little in the way of virtuoso élan or dynamic momentum. Compare his listless 'cross-string' articulation in Var 3 to Claudio Arrau's lighter, suppler touch (Pentatone, 6/76) and you'd swear that the 70-plus Arrau was actually the younger pianist. Sample Douglas's heavy-gaited double notes in Vars 1 and 2 alongside the quicker, more incisive Jean-Yves Thibaudet (Decca, 10/95) and Evgeny Kissin (RCA, 6/96), or his ho-hum Var 13 octave *glissandos* next to Yuja Wang's brilliantly gauged timing (DG, 7/10).

Conversely, Douglas comes fully alive throughout the C major Sonata. His proportioned *rubatos* in the first movement's second theme and broodingly sustained *Andante* imbue the unwieldy textures with colour and variety. The *Scherzo*'s sharply pointed rhythms and the finale's hair-trigger chordal leaps also reveal Douglas on top of his technical and musical game.

In Op 117 No 3 and Op 119 No 2 the pianist favours mass over line, although the three Op 76 selections and D minor 'Edward' Ballade achieve genuine chamber-like interaction from one register to another. Full-bodied pianism and tightly unified (yet never rigid) tempo relationships give the Op 9 *Schumann* Variations distinction; notice, for example, how Douglas's long-lined sweep in the penultimate variation

radically differs from Oleg Marshev's protracted tempo and exploratory inner voices (Danacord, 12/05). Recommended, except for the *Paganini* Variations.

**Jed Distler**

## Castelnuovo-Tedesco

*Evangelion*

**Alessandro Marangoni** *pf*

Naxos © 8 573316 (72' • DDD)



Alessandro Marangoni follows his disc of the two piano concertos (9/12) with a first

complete recording of Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Evangelion* ('The Story of Jesus'), music of an introspection in marked contrast to the all-the-fun-of-the-fair flamboyance of the concertos. Willing, like Villa-Lobos, to try his hand at anything, Castelnuovo-Tedesco was scarcely less prolific, his output during his Hollywood years encompassing virtually every imaginable genre.

Though he was Jewish, much of his music is centred on New Testament texts and the present 28-piece cycle takes us from 'The Infancy' to 'The Passion'. There is a pronounced Spanish flavour (possibly deriving from the composer's association with Segovia), though to claim that the writing is 'dramatically virtuosic' when not 'profoundly introspective' is stretching things. Slight when not periodically charming and engaging, there is little to compare with, say, Mompou's religious distillation (his *Música callada*) or the opulent religious masterpieces of Liszt and Messiaen. 'The Three Kings' plod along in comically unceremonial style (though no comedy is intended); and although 'The Woman of Samaria' gives us an attractive forlane, there is too little to delight and surprise those looking for unusual encores. 'Gethsemane' is more lengthy than moving and a final burst of hymn-like joy in 'The Resurrection' comes too late to redeem music that fails to match or conjure its biblical inspiration. The performance is, however, suitably poised and devotional, and Naxos's sound is excellent. **Bryce Morrison**

## Chopin

Ballade No 1, Op 23. Three Ecosais, Op 72. Three Mazurkas, Op 68. Four Mazurkas, Op 17. Polonaises - No 5, Op 44; No 6, 'Heroic', Op 53. Three Waltzes, Op 34

**Marek Bracha** *pf*

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFCCD700 (63' • DDD)



Another Chopin recital, a recording debut, and another gifted young Pole.

Marek Bracha, fresh from his studies in Warsaw and at the RCM, is the recipient of numerous scholarships and has participated in various competitions but I can't say that this disc recorded in October 2012, fine as it is, heralds the arrival of a compelling new talent with novel things to say about these much-recorded pieces.

That said, it's not every Chopin programme that opens with the three Ecosais (especially when they are ordered 3, 1, 2). They are closely linked, and Bracha invests them with a perky lilt that immediately grabs the attention, as does the cool-toned, immaculately voiced Steinway. We then head off into the great A flat Polonaise, where a certain emotional reserve is on show. The famous central octave section comes and goes merely as a contrasted interlude: whether you decide to play it as a cavalry charge (Rubinstein, Blechacz) or, as Chopin preferred, an approaching cavalcade (the single instruction he gives anywhere is at the top of the piece – *maestoso*), it needs more character and colour than it receives here. The four Mazurkas of Op 17 (ordered 3, 4, 2, 1) and the three of Op 68 (3, 2, 1) are as successful as the Ecosais. Bracha is no sentimentalist and a masterpiece like the heartbreaking A minor Mazurka, Op 17 No 4, is all the more effective for that.

The Ballade comes off well without dislodging benchmark performances by Cortot, Argerich and Perahia, *inter alios*. The three Waltzes, Op 34 (ordered 1, 3, 2) provide further variety of tone and texture. Finally, in the dramatic flourishes of the F sharp minor Polonaise, Bracha lets his hair down to play with a passion and abandon that are lacking elsewhere.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

## Glass

Mad Rush. Metamorphosis I-V. Etude No 2.

Satyagraha - Conclusion, Act 3. Closing

**Lisa Moore** *pf*

Orange Mountain Music © OMM0099 (61' • DDD)



'Yet another disc of Glass piano music,' I hear you say; but

before you start scanning the other columns on this page in search of a more relevant review, let

me tell you – this one is worthy of serious consideration.

Of course, there already exist a number of fine recordings of Glass's piano music (Lenahan, Namekawa, Schleiermacher and Whitwell, to name but a few) and it is perhaps surprising that Lisa Moore's name is only now being added to this list, given her reputation as one of minimalist music's finest exponents. But fine wine always benefits from being allowed to mature; and what becomes abundantly clear from listening to almost any bar on this recording is Moore's highly developed, intuitive and nuanced approach to this music, one which has been allowed to evolve and refine over a number of years.

This maturity is achieved without compromise, however. An edge and physicality, most likely honed through years of playing with the Bang on a Can ensemble, is evident throughout. Take the title-track, *Mad Rush*, for example. On Sally Whitwell's recording (ABC Classics, A/14), the three-against-two patterns of the opening create a nervous intensity; she then opts for a dense 'wall of sound' in the ensuing fast section. Moore takes a different approach. She sets up far more dramatic juxtapositions between these two sections by keeping the opening understated and subdued before going for all-out drama in the rapid passages. Both approaches work, of course, but the latter enables Moore to take full control of the piece's overall form.

In the performance of Glass's *Etude No 2*, Moore's muscularity is even more evident, especially towards the end. It is far more dynamic and free-flowing than Namekawa's recording (OMM, 2/15), which sounds pedestrian and almost lifeless by comparison. The second movement from Glass's *Trilogy Sonata* (a transcription of the concluding scene from his opera *Satyagraha*) is also dispatched with focus and flair. Too many Glass recordings? Moore's disc more than argues its case for inclusion. **Pwyl ap Siôn**

## Hasse

'Sonatas from the Italian Manuscripts'  
Sonatas del Sig Sassone – in F; in G.  
Sonatas – No 4; No 5. Fuga e Moderato.  
Harpsichord Concerto

Andrea Bacchetti *pf*

RCA Red Seal © 88883 72520-2 (54' • DDD)



Known for his immense and influential operatic and sacred output,

Johann Adolf Hasse wrote relatively little for solo keyboard. All but two of the works on this disc constitute world premieres, while the two-movement Sonatas Nos 4 and 5 receive their first recordings on a modern concert grand. Not that the choice of instrument really matters, because the music's textural dimensions and technical challenges are modest at best; to play a Hasse sonata on a nine-foot Fazioli Model F278 is like driving a Rolls-Royce to go get a pastry or a pretzel. Yet with Andrea Bacchetti behind the proverbial wheel, one should be grateful.

Aside from a discreet filled-in octave or embellishment here and there, Bacchetti plays these works simply and directly, with just enough colour and nuance to keep things interesting without overloading the music. He enlivens the D minor organ fugue's detached and sustained phrasings and eloquently sings out the three-movement G major Sonata's central *Largo* with virtually no help from the sustain pedal. Even the threadbare textures of the strangely proportioned F major Concerto (two short, quick movements bookending a lengthy slow movement) benefit from Bacchetti's subtle changes of timbre in order to delineate solo and *tutti* roles.

His playing always makes a strong case for Hasse's undisputed melodic gifts. The tunes invariably lodge in your memory, such as those in the aforementioned Fourth Sonata's long first movement: did Mozart dictate to Hasse back from the future? And Sonata No 5's *Allegro* is not unlike a Handel aria supported by Vivaldi's typically churning rhythms. The intimate, slightly dry sound befits the music to the point of magnifying Bacchetti's occasional grunts and groans. **Jed Distler**

## Kurtág

'In memoriam Haydée'

Játékok. Bach Transcriptions

György Kurtág, Márta Kurtág *pf*

Video director Isabelle Soulad

ECM New Series © DVD 076 2896;

© 076 2897 (82' • NTSC • 16:9 •

PCM stereo • O). Recorded live at the Cité de la Musique, Paris, September 22, 2012



György Kurtág's *Játékok* ('Games') is one of the more remarkable musical projects to emerge in the post-war era. Begun in 1973, its eight books (which comprise over 400 pieces to date) are of extreme brevity but their expressive range is all-encompassing – music poised between

the discipline of an exercise and the spontaneity of a whim; 'games' as a dialogue of technique and inspiration. The composer and his wife Márta have been giving selections of these pieces for a quarter of a century now; some of them have taken on an almost ritualistic quality, though the present recital is much more of a concert presentation. A lengthy one, even so, with its 43 pieces of around 70 minutes – including eight of those Bach transcriptions that have run concurrently within Kurtág's output and which between them provide an overview of the emotional territory explored by a diary in sound that has no direct parallel in its unwavering immediacy.

Its public context notwithstanding, this is very much a recital such as the Kurtágs might give at home, each player standing 'in attendance' when only one is playing, and the occasional furtive glance serving to underline the innate unpredictability of this music even for such seasoned performers. Maybe it was this as much as the actual content that kept the audience in its thrall; yet no one should doubt the concentration of those present over the course of this singular music-making. No less touching is the uncertainty of both players when deciding how to go about an encore, resulting in a hasty leafing through discarded score-pages to locate desired items – in this instance, a bell-permeated homage to Stravinsky and two Bach transcriptions.

The visual presentation (rightly) refrains from imposing any conceptual gloss on the performance, maintaining a steady focus on the Kurtágs as they unfold their programme (Márta takes on all of the solo pieces from No 20 onwards), and with the occasional shot of an audience that seems caught up in proceedings at all times. Details of each piece are provided on the fold-out digipack but there is nothing on the actual music here or on the DVD. Even so, this is without doubt as fitting a way into this music, played by its most dedicated exponents, as one could wish.

**Richard Whitehouse**

## Leguizamón

'El cuchi bien temperado'

Coplas des Tata Dios. Zamba del carnaval.

La cantora de Yala. Chacarera del expediente.

Chaya de la albahaca. Zamba de Lozano.

El silbador. De sólo estar. Chacarera del holgado.

Carnavalito del Duende. Zamba para la Viuda.

Zamba soltera. Corazonando. Zamba del pañuelo.

Chilena del solterón. Maturana.

Canción del que no hace nada

Pablo Márquez *gtr*

ECM New Series © 481 0972 (67' • DDD)





The title of Pablo Márquez's latest release is intriguing – 'The Well-Tempered Pig' – and requires explanation. 'Cuchi' was the apparently affectionate nickname of Gustavo 'Cuchi' Leguizamón, (1917-2000), one of Argentina's greatest contributors to the 'boom del folklore' in 1960s Buenos Aires. Márquez, who hails from Leguizamón's birthplace of Salta, has taken some of the composer's folksongs and arranged them for solo guitar while ensuring he 'visits' every key through the use of eight different *afinaciones* (tunings) – hence the reference to Bach's *Forty-Eight*.

Márquez is always a thoughtful, imaginative player, as supple as he is subtle, across a wide range of genres and periods from Renaissance to contemporary. Here, however, he is on home turf; and there's a natural fluency to playing which seems somehow warmer, freer and more instinctive than on those previous recordings I've had the pleasure of hearing.

As with the tango, there is often little distinction between dance and song, and the majority of the 'songs' here are in the form of a *zamba*, an Argentinian dance of Peruvian origin in compound time (it is no relation to the Brazilian samba). Whether it's in the stippled palette of the opening *Coplas des Tata Dios*, the darker-hued *Carnavalito del Duende* or the mellifluous *Zamba para la Viuda*, Márquez's arrangements abound in the colouristic use of various devices such as *tambora* (striking the strings with the side of the hand), *rasgueo* (strumming), *glissandos*, and simple harmonisations in thirds or sixths which open out into flowing arpeggios or skilfully voiced chords. **William Yeoman**

## MCCABE

'Le poisson magique'

Carol Preludes. Dies Resurrectionis. Esperanza. Johannis-Partita, Op 30. Le poisson magique: Meditation after Paul Klee. Nocturne. Prelude. Sinfonia, Op 6

**Tom Winpenny** *org*

Resonus (M) ➔ RES10144

(72' • DDD • [resonusclassics.com](http://resonusclassics.com))

Played on the Harrison & Harrison organ of St Albans Cathedral



John McCabe was noted, of course, as a composer-pianist, in the former role

notably for piano and orchestral works. But he touched on every genre except grand opera, so it should not surprise that he wrote a goodly amount of organ music. Most of this dates from his early years, between 1961 (the vigorous, well-crafted *Sinfonia*) and 1964 (*Johannis-Partita*, Prelude and Nocturne), written to requests from organist colleagues which the young composer seized on as a way of hearing his music played well. It is remarkable how the *Sinfonia* and *Dies Resurrectionis* (1963) embrace and catch so well (and intentionally) the medium of the French organist-composers, while the *Johannis-Partita* looks across to Luneburg, where Bach played in his youth, in the form of a French suite. Of the smaller pieces, the title-track, *Le poisson magique* (1964), is the most impressive, a colouristic chaconne in two tempi.

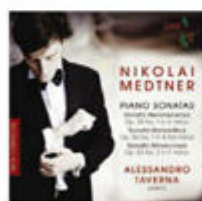
It may be coincidence that following the successful premiere of his First Symphony, *Elegy* (1965 – reviewed on page 33), he turned away from the organ, but the final two works here, *Carol Preludes* (2008) and *Esperanza* (2010), date from his final seven years. His reawakened interest in the instrument shows immediately that his writing had lost none of its verve. The seven *Carol Preludes* are a delightful set of miniature tone-poems based around English, French and German Christmas tunes; the highlights for this longtime fan of Maddy Prior and Hindemith are Nos 5-6, 'Tomorrow shall be my dancing day' and 'Es sungen drei Engel'. *Esperanza* was partly inspired by the dramatic release of the Chilean miners, although work had begun on it already. Tom Winpenny brings all these varied scores to life, the music soaring off the manuals in Resonus's scintillating recording. Highly recommended. **Guy Rickards**

## MEDTNER

Ein Idyll, Op 7 No 1. Sonata minacciosa, Op 53 No 2. Sonata reminiscenza, Op 38 No 1. Sonata romantica, Op 53 No 1

**Alessandro Taverna** *pf*

Somm (P) SOMMCD0142 (68' • DDD)



Medtner is a 'marmite' composer. Even some fervent pianophiles struggle, especially on a first hearing, with the profusion of ideas presented in apparently rambling structures. With closer scrutiny and longer acquaintance, his organic, neo-Brahmsian approach to composition reveals itself with rewarding results. The grand scale and

imposing architecture of the *Reminiscenza*, *Romantica* and *Minacciosa* sonatas (Nos 10, 12 and 13) – all, in effect, single-movement works with an array of thematic cross-references – are superbly grasped by the Italian Alessandro Taverna (*b*1983, first prize at the Minnesota, third prize at the Leeds 2009 competitions). He's a fine pianist with good fingers; but, comparing him to the very highest level, one cannot overlook the fact that he tends to skate over details and generalise dynamics.

Just take one of the movements: the *Scherzo* from the *Sonata romantica*, surely one of Medtner's most inspired 14 pages and certainly among the most technically challenging. This rollercoaster ride of dizzying right-hand passagework and eruptive syncopation veers between tumultuous onslaught and utmost delicacy. Medtner is very precise with his instructions. It's marked *presto leggiero* (*ma sempre marcato, molto ritmico e al rigore*). Taverna takes it at a creditable *allegro vivace* (5'04"); Hamelin, at a barely credible 4'27", manages not only to dispatch it all with greater clarity and rhythmic élan but also with more precisely differentiated *ppp* and *pp*, as well as observing the *strepitoso*, *tumultuoso* and *minaccioso* ('threatening') requests, and hammering home the frequent *sforzandos* to thrilling effect. It leaves the breathless listener asking how on earth he does it. But make no mistake: if you had not heard Hamelin, you would rightly applaud Taverna who, in this first-class recording (Siva Oke and Paul Arden-Taylor), with its thought-provoking booklet (Robert Matthew-Walker), is well worth hearing. **Jeremy Nicholas**

## Mendelssohn

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**Howard Shelley** *pf*

Hyperion (P) CDA68098 (65' • DDD)



Mendelssohn and Howard Shelley are a musical marriage made in heaven. Stylish and delectably light-fingered, Shelley makes a flawless case in Vol 3 of his complete cycle for music once subjected to a damning verdict: 'Mendelssohn does not go deep.' True, Mendelssohn's emotional spectrum is often geared to a conventional Victorian taste and there is much that is busy rather than genuinely eventful. His

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melodic material, whether presented in tranquil or flighty form, can seem banal or endearing according to taste.

Yet he is also full of surprises, with a greater spirit of adventure in the Third Caprice, with its grand ceremonial opening and fire-spitting follow-up. The B minor Scherzo (rather than the more familiar E minor) gives us a more familiar patter of fairy feet but the *Scherzo a capriccio* (once subjected to Horowitz's mischievous trickery) outstays its welcome – a case of much ado about too little. If anyone can persuade us of Mendelssohn's quality, though, it is Shelley. A master of a wide recorded repertoire (the Beethoven concertos, a complete Rachmaninov and a sadly incomplete Mozart concerto cycle), he makes it clear that Mendelssohn has a special place in his affections. Hyperion's sound and presentation are as immaculate as ever. **Bryce Morrison**

## Mozart

Piano Sonatas – No 4, K282; No 5, K283; No 10, K330; No 12, K332; No 13, K333; No 16, K545; No 17, K570; No 18, K576. Fantasia, K397. Gigue, K574. Rondos – K485; K511

**Marc-André Hamelin** *pf*

Hyperion © 2 CDA68029 (155' • DDD)



Mozart's piano sonatas are still underrated, I dare say, apart from a handful. There are eight of them here, on two discs, in an order which appears to be random; perhaps that doesn't matter. Each disc closes with a couple of pieces that used to appear in editions as 'miscellaneous' and be considered as miniatures, even the A minor Rondo, K511, which is a soliloquy of the most personal kind and lasts more than 11 minutes. Hamelin's cultivated performance shows clearly that he loves it. The incomplete D minor Fantasia, K397, is also here, a document on a broad scale of Mozart's powers as an improviser; a thousand pities it breaks off soon after turning to D major, near the end. The publisher Breitkopf provided 10 bars to make a perfunctory conclusion which Hamelin rejects in favour of an ending of his own. He doesn't sound too sure of himself in this (who would?) but I wish he had gone on a bit.

I mention two tracks I enjoyed especially and where I think Hamelin has a lot to offer. The G major Gigue, K574, is also dispatched as few could, breathtakingly, though it's kicked downstairs rather brashly at the end. Hamelin's accents tend to be

whipcracks rather than pressure points, and he gives the little B flat major Sonata, K570, a fearful cuff round the chops and sending-off in its final chords. His mechanism is second to none and rightly celebrated, but in the sonatas it sometimes obtrudes as if he wasn't sure what to do with it. His fingers say too little. He chatters and agitates the surface of any movement that is lively. Like many virtuosos of superabundant gifts he shows a tendency to speed up when a brilliant passage is within reach and to play ever faster, as if he couldn't help it. There may be ropes of pearls on offer to some people but his scales, to me, are the length of a piece of string. The notion that vocal music should always be a model for the instrumentalist – Mozart's father was insistent on this point – gets short shrift. I miss *cantabile*, a singing style of playing, now nearly obsolete, which calls for an intense connection of the notes through the fingertips.

But Hamelin is never dull. He may not touch the heart through a perfect blend of control and insight, of pulse and flexibility, but his capacity for brilliance, for beauty of sound, and his flawless technical address can amount to pleasures in themselves. And there is always a response to the music – no dead wood. Some of the most sustained good listening occurred, for me, rather surprisingly in the E flat major Sonata, K282, the most Haydnesque and unconventional of the early ones, and in the so-called 'easy' Sonata in C major, K545, 'for beginners'. Elsewhere Schnabel's observation that the Mozart sonatas are too easy for children and too difficult for grown-ups came to mind, as did Alfred Brendel's warning that piano-playing in Mozart, be it ever so perfect, is never enough. **Stephen Plaistow**

## Rachmaninov

The Complete Preludes

**Leon McCawley** *pf*

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0143 (78' • DDD)



Leaving frantic and over-pressured playing to others, Leon McCawley finds a delicate emotional fervour with no lack of drama in Rachmaninov's 24 Preludes, aligning himself with other celebrated performances on disc by Moura Lympany (the second of her three recordings on both Decca and Testament), Howard Shelley and Steven Osborne – three of several issues by British pianists – and Ashkenazy.

There are fewer moments of musical neutrality than in the past, with Op 3 No 2 an imperious response to the over-familiar. An unusually rapid tempo for Op 23 No 1 never masks a haunting sense of its melancholy climbing, and there is a defiant touch at the end. McCawley is crisp and characterful in the Polonaise of No 5 and is no less attuned to the starry emotion of No 6 or the capricious arabesques of the delectable A flat Prelude (No 8).

In the still richer fields of Op 32, McCawley sweeps aside the stale notion that Rachmaninov was a conservative (think the wild and whirling No 6). He sounds grateful for the startling burst of gaiety in No 2, is scrupulously sensitive to No 10 in B minor (the one forever associated with Moiseiwitsch) and ends with a broad and dignified rather than hysterical performance of the magisterial No 13. Somm's sound is entirely equal to the occasion, and this is a distinguished issue.

**Bryce Morrison**

## Rachmaninov

'Transcriptions and Arrangements for Organ' Etude-tableau, Op 39 No 9. Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op 42. Fugue (1891). Prelude, Op 32 No 11. Vocalise, Op 34 No 14<sup>a</sup>. Symphonic Dances, Op 45 (transcr Filsell, <sup>a</sup>Potts)

**Jeremy Filsell** *org*

Signum © SIGCD324 (77' • DDD)

Played on the Fred J Cooper Memorial Organ, Dobson Opus 76, Verizon Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, Philadelphia



This is an intriguing proposition, but one that contains sufficient musical delight to warrant a serious audition. The high quality of the chosen music being a given, what does transferring it to the pipe organ add? It helps that the instrument in Philadelphia's Verizon Hall – the largest mechanical-action instrument in an American concert hall – has such a stunning sonic presence, one that, under Jeremy Filsell's masterful technique, has sufficient tonal resource to constantly refresh the ear. Every corner of its kaleidoscopic majesty is thoroughly explored. Rachmaninov's own exposure to the organ seems to have been limited to his acquaintance with Marcel Dupré through their mutual friend Nikolay Medtner. As an arch-Romantic, he would surely approve of the glowing fervour which player and instrument bring to this inherently rhythmic music.

The opening march-like *Etude-tableau* sets the scene immediately, with the

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## PIENAAR'S BEETHOVEN SONATAS

**Jed Distler** listens to the South African pianist's ten-disc traversal of the 'new testament' of the piano repertoire



Capturing Beethoven's 'critical, investigative, individualistic and indeed defiant mind': Daniel-Ben Pienaar

Daniel-Ben Pienaar's booklet-notes for his Beethoven sonata cycle discuss the dichotomy between Beethoven's creative impulse and the kind of dutiful literalism favoured by many of his modern-day interpreters. 'While Beethoven's revelations are born of a critical, investigative, individualistic and indeed defiant mind and personality, the performer's role is assumed to be somehow to "transmit" those revelations through keeping in check the very same characteristics in himself, implying that it is somehow indecent not to convey a sense of respectfulness at all times in his very readings.' In other words, Pienaar is justifying his interpretations, which abound with rhetorical underpinnings, unwritten arpeggiated chords, breaking of hands, and retooled phrasings, dynamics and accents.

Pienaar also cites individual characteristics of noted past Beethoven interpreters, implying that 'if it's good enough for Schnabel or Horowitz, it's good enough for me'. Fair enough; yet to what extent does Pienaar's prodigious expressive portfolio either illuminate or distract from the music? The answer varies from work to work. Such gestures reinforce the charged brio of Op 2 No 1's outer movements, lend alluring textural variety to Op 2 No 2's *Largo* and intensify the pianist's brisk, angular approach to Op 2 No 3's first, third and fourth

movements. His *tenutos* in Op 7's *Scherzo* border on fussy (as they do throughout Op 78), yet underline Beethoven's off-beat accents, while, by contrast, the Rondo is simple, direct and genuinely *grazioso*.

If the fast movements of Op 10 Nos 1 and 2 race ahead to the point of sacrificing punctuation, desynchronised hands pacify the incisive momentum of No 3's opening *Presto*, while the Minuet's tapered *legato* lines ooze treacle. Arpeggiating the *Pathétique*'s *Grave* introduction might have been more convincing with a firmer basic pulse; the latter, however, assertively propels the movement's main section. If you like Wilhelm Backhaus's informal, slightly cavalier Op 14 readings, you'll find Pienaar's remakes essentially more self-aware. Some of Op 22's fussy point-making is not to my taste but Op 26 stands out for the *Scherzo*'s unusually defined left-hand work, a massive, hauntingly shaded Funeral March, plus a resolutely moderate and clearly structured *Allegro assai*.

A few misjudged accents throw the dactylic trajectory of Op 27 No 1's second movement off-kilter. The *Moonlight*'s *Adagio* almost sounds like late Schumann, with Pienaar's hands slightly out of sync. This effect works less well with the *Allegretto*'s string quartet-like part-writing; I have a similar criticism concerning Op 101's first movement. However, Pienaar's light touch and stinging accents are just what the *Presto*

*agitato* needs. A fast yet flexible first movement augurs well for an outstanding *Pastoral* Sonata, undone, however, by Pienaar's clunky, sectionalised *Scherzo*.

Not surprisingly, Pienaar laps up Beethoven's intentionally broken chords throughout Op 31 No 1's *Allegro vivace*, although the Rondo's brusque dynamic surges seem forced rather than genuinely felt. He makes the most out of the *Tempest*'s controversial long pedal markings and evokes the charged angularity of Schnabel's Op 31 No 3 *Presto con fuoco* (albeit with all of the notes, by the skin of their teeth!), but overloads Op 49 No 1's Rondo and glibly clips its companion sonata's Minuet. The *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* abound with unabashed virtuosity, energy, dynamism and many striking details (the former's astonishingly smooth octave *glissandos*, for instance), but Op 54's opening Minuet is too heavy to take wing. After two ordinary movements, Pienaar's Op 79 wakes up for a deliciously offhand finale. *Les adieux* conveys the music's requisite brio, despite bizarre balances and arbitrary accents. Comparably personalised details fortify Op 90's first-movement transitions, while the Schubertian second movement boasts refined melody/accompaniment delineation. The *Hammerklavier* is aptly combative in the first, second and fourth movements, apart from a few mannered gestures (superfluously elongated notes in the finale's fugue subject, for example).

Pienaar's style lends itself to the rhapsodic introductory movement of Op 109. The *Prestissimo* crackles with tension, while the third-movement variations' headlong lyricism spills over into Op 110. But nifty inflections defuse the impact of the *Allegro molto*'s rhythmic displacements, just as arpeggiations soften the shock of certain loud chords in Op 111's first movement. The Arietta, though, is remarkable. The pianist adapts a very slow tempo and articulates the long right-hand melody slightly ahead of the left-hand bass-lines. Pienaar's liberal pedalling creates a hypnotic blur over subsequent variations and the long chains of trills, although momentum flags when he flattens out the fast dotted rhythms. If Pienaar's Beethoven walks a thin line between stimulation and eccentricity, his inquiring and restless mind is never in doubt. **G**



### THE RECORDING

**Beethoven**

'The 32 Piano Sonatas'

**Daniel-Ben Pienaar**

Avie © 10 AV2320

swaggering mechanical ‘chugging’ which is such a feature of the first of the *Symphonic Dances*. The *Corelli Variations* benefit from Filsell’s subtle polyphonic colouring and he relishes the emphatic bounce of the early student Fugue. Nigel Potts’s transcription of the evergreen *Vocalise* does it no harm.

The main course of this feast is the arrangement of the *Symphonic Dances*, which is based on the two-piano version. Among many lovely moments are the Mutation stop masquerading as an alto sax in the first movement, the judicious use of the Tremulants, the Bell Star’s appearances (in lieu of the orchestra’s battery) and the cheeky ‘klaxons’, given out on a trumpet stop. The electrifying conclusion (including the three pedal pipes of the 64ft stop) is a resounding success.

Malcolm Riley

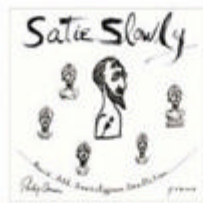
## Satie

‘Satie Slowly’

Ogives. Gnossienne No 1. The Feast Given by the Norman Knights to Honour a Young Girl. Preludes of the Nazarene. The Gothic Dances. Trois Gymnopédies. Fanfares of the Rose and Cross. Chorales. Empire’s Diva

Philip Corner *pf*

Unseen Worlds © ② UW12CD (108) • DDD



‘If Satie’s piano pieces are so easy, why are they so badly played?’

asks Philip Corner in the chunky booklet that accompanies his back-to-basics performances of Satie evergreens, including *Gnossienne* No 1 and the *Gymnopédies* as well as some rarely heard piano compositions such as *Ogives*, *Fanfares of the Rose and Cross* and *Empire’s Diva*. Corner is himself a composer whose aesthetic directions changed for ever when he met John Cage during the 1960s. Satie’s compositional objectivity was an important lesson from the past for New York School composers such as Cage and Feldman, and Corner’s set aims to reclaim Satie from those who perform him as aromatherapy for the cochlea – ‘those who indulge [in added expressivity] sound ridiculous,’ Corner adds, before suggesting such sexing-up is unnecessary because in this music ‘nothing is lacking’.

Corner is not, of course, the first pianist to identify an apparent disconnect between Satie’s cool detachment and that tendency to sentimentalise his music. Claire Chevallier’s excellent recital disc (ZZT, 11/09) offers a necessary antidote to Jean-Yves Thibaudet’s unpalatably sweet Satie

(Decca, 3/03). But Corner takes matters a whole stage further.

Chevallier’s *Ogive I* lasts 2’25”, Corner’s 4’13”. His *Gnossienne* No 1 clocks in at 10’05” compared to Chevallier’s 4’48”. And even when they do fall into broad alignment over matters of tempo – the *Gymnopédies* match almost to the second – there is a designer austerity about Corner’s touch that recalibrates our view of Satie. An argument could be constructed (file under Bernstein’s ‘Nimrod’) accusing Corner of deliberately distorting Satie’s intentions to pursue wider ideological agenda. But Satie – the composer of *Vexations*, who liked to immerse himself in occultist Masonic-style rituals – would surely have approved of Corner’s poetic licence, the patient air he circulates through Satie’s structures reconnecting us with his unholy alliance of plain-spoken melody and harmonic innuendo.

Philip Clark

## Schubert

‘Fantaisie’

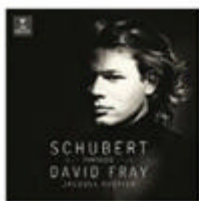
Piano Sonata No 18, D894.

Hungarian Melody, D817. Fantasia, D940<sup>a</sup>.

Allegro, ‘Lebensstürme’, D947<sup>a</sup>

David Fray, <sup>a</sup>Jacques Rouvier *pf*

Erato © 2564 61669-9 (79) • DDD



I wish there were more CDs of Schubert’s piano music like this – a well-planned

programme but also a recital welcoming the claim of the four-hand works to be heard alongside the great solo sonatas and pieces. The duets found a market among amateur musicians in Schubert’s lifetime which continues to this day; so they are not exactly neglected. Yet we still too rarely allow them to escape their domestic associations and grant them a place among the greatest Schubert we have. They are ensemble pieces of the highest calibre, the nearest two pianists get to playing chamber music together, and they should surely be performed and listened to in the context of his piano music as a whole. How rarely we hear them in recordings that match up to their range and achieve the finish they are given here.

David Fray has called the disc ‘The Fantasy according to Schubert’. An exaggeration, a bit of a selling point perhaps? I think not. Forget improvisations and freewheeling forms: the title is relevant to the space Schubert so often needs to attain, as Mahler put it, ‘freedom below the surface of convention’. When the G major

solo Sonata, D894, was new and appeared as a Sonata-Fantasy – the publisher’s title, not the composer’s – an alert contemporary noted that ‘within its not unusual formal layout, everything internal is uncouth and full of fantasy’.

David Fray is alive to the way the music moves at every point and skilled at evoking worlds of sound beyond the piano. Sometimes the orchestra is close, or the voice, or the dance floor, or an impression of something floating in from outdoors, from the countryside maybe. His rhythm is immaculate, with a naturalness in matters of articulation and continuity that appears instinctive. He keeps the music airborne. Yet perhaps most admirable are his insights in the first movement. Here the character and ‘fantasy’ of this sonata is apparent in its extraordinary inspiration at the start, which has to do with the very nature of piano sound – more precisely by the piano’s capacity to prolong a simple *pianissimo* chord through resonance and reverberation to an echo of it, after the flick of a grace note, at the point when the original chord is dying away. No one had written for the piano in this way before.

Jacques Rouvier was David Fray’s teacher. They make superb duettists, and I think one would have to go back to Murray Perahia and Radu Lupu – long ago – to find a far-reaching version of the F minor Fantasia, D940, as fine as theirs. Again, sound is the key, frequently determined here by associations with the orchestra and with singing, and they control it ideally in the realms of dynamics, colour and nuance. There is often a lot of it but they temper the sonorities with impeccable balancing and make you aware of how important degrees of loud and soft are in Schubert, both as volumes of sound and as indicators of character. They are bold as well as dreamlike in a piece which constantly interrupts itself and diverts the argument from its expected course. You hold your breath in the Italianate lyricism of the slow section, with its reputed reference to Paganini (‘I thought I heard an angel sing’).

How very different is the ambition of the Allegro in A minor, D947, nearly as long with its exposition repeat as the entire Fantasia. Another publisher’s title – *Lebensstürme* (‘The Storms of Life’) – has stuck to it and perhaps not inappropriately. The storms of life Schubert knew a lot about, his music tells us, and their capriciousness and destabilising force seem to blow through this immense symphonic span. If you’ve never heard it in a performance as good as this it will establish Schubert for you as a four-hand master and



banish, I hope, all thoughts of piano duets as a genre of uncertain standing.

**Stephen Plaistow**

*Fantasia, D940 – selected comparison:*

*Perabla, Lupu (3/86) (SONY) 88697 85811-2*

## Smetana

'Piano Works, Vol 7'

Polka in E flat. Notturmo in E flat. Rondos (1846). Variations on a Theme of a Bohemian Folksong. Andante in F. Two Pieces in C. Vivace in F. Marches (1845). Figuration on the Chorale 'Gott sei uns gnädig und barmherzig'. Piano Sonata in G minor. Fugues – in A minor; in C; in D; in E minor. Piece in C minor. Etudes (1846). Sonatenform (1846)

**Jitka Čechová** *pf*

Supraphon © ② SU3847-2 (144' • DDD)



In 2005 Jitka Čechová launched what promises to be the most comprehensive

Smetana cycle on disc. Ten years later she reaches Vol 7, a two-disc collection that mostly features early works recorded for the first time. Some of them are extremely interesting. For example, given the E flat Notturmo's contrapuntal accompaniment and the D minor Rondo's brusque, full-bodied chordal textures, one might describe those works as prototypes of Brahms's late-period Intermezzos (Brahms, of course, was nine years Smetana's junior). By contrast, the five multi-themed 1845 Marches evoke Schubert's longueurs, if not his twists of genius. Four student fugues sound like, well, excellent generic student fugues (the D minor is pure Handel). Of the three *Sonatenform* movements, the A major holds interest for its asymmetrical phrases which rise and fall in unpredictable patterns.

Čechová goes the variations on the Czech folksong 'Sowing the millet' with perky accents, highlighted inner voices and some truly explosive octaves. It contrasts with the more classically poised and straightforwardly incisive recording in Vera Repková's pioneering 'complete' 1952-53 Smetana cycle (CPO, 11/89). Likewise, Čechová's slower rendition of the A minor Etude is less overtly virtuoso than Repková's, yet better characterises the composer's 'Liedform' subtitle.

No quirky detail of the sprawling, early and ambitious 30-minute G minor Sonata goes unnoticed on Čechová's watch, from the speech-like phrasing of the first movement's *dolce* passages to the sustained and fluid precision of the *Presto* finale's difficult rapid two-against-three

figurations. In sum, a fascinating and excellently produced instalment of an important cycle.

**Jed Distler**

## Widor

Four Organ Symphonies, Op 13

**Christian Schmitt** *org*

CPO © ② CPO777 705-2 (134' • DDD/DSD)

Played on the Cavaillé-Coll organ of the Church of St Ouen, Rouen



The four symphonies of the Op 13 set originated in 1872. Nowadays we hear

them – 24 movements in all – in the revised versions that Widor made decades later. Suites in all but name, they betray a range of influences. In No 1, for instance, we hear Bach in the opening 'Prélude', Wagner in the chromatic *Adagio* and Meyerbeer in the 'Marche pontificale', the symphony's best-known movement. The third (Intermezzo) is a toccata, a prototype for the famous one in Op 42 No 1. Widor's slow movements can descend into ruminative post-communion musings and Op 13 No 2 has five of them, rescued here by the range of colours on offer in St Ouen. Its most striking sections are the 'Pastorale', reminiscent of Franck, and the finale (*allegro vivace, fff*) with its exciting, motoric pedal figure. The highlights of No 3 are the delightful dialogue in the 'Minuetto' between the solo flute and oboe, and a toccata-like finale built on galloping triplets; No 4 has the popular *Andante cantabile* movement often heard on its own, and a brilliant *Scherzo à la Mendelssohn* with a Schumannesque canonic central section.

St Ouen's organ was described by Widor in 1890 as 'an organ for Michelangelo' and it's the perfect instrument on which to hear his music, if, that is, you don't mind missing much detail in fast/loud passages – the dotted right-hand figure in the central A flat section of the 'Marche pontificale', for example, or the clear pulse of the triplets in the finale of No 3. Throughout, Christian Schmitt takes a far broader view of tempi than, say, Günther Kaunzinger (Novalis, 10/90 – nla), whose 'Marche pontificale' is positively jaunty (7'53") compared to Schmitt's speaker-crunching spectacular (9'47"), with his deployment of an awesome 32ft Contra Bombarde that will put a smile on your face. While Schmitt's pacing takes account of the spacious acoustic, the trade-off leaves you wanting him to get a move on and inject some Gallic élan into the music.

**Jeremy Nicholas**

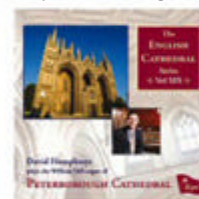
## 'The English Cathedral Series, Vol 19: Peterborough'

**Bull** *Salve regina* **Buxtehude** Fantasia on 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern', BuxWV223 **Dupré** Final, Op 27 No 2 **Elgar** Sursum corda, Op 11 (transcr Lemare) **P Moore** Organ Sonata – Andante tranquillo **Mozart** Fantasia, K608 **Parry** Fantasia and Fugue, Op 188 **Reger** Toccata, Op 59 No 5. Fugue, Op 59 No 6 **Schumann** Study in Canonic Form, Op 56 No 5

**David Humphreys** *org*

Regent © REGCD459 (63' • DDD)

Played on the organ of Peterborough Cathedral



This latest instalment in Regent's trawl through the organs of English cathedrals

takes us to Peterborough. Here an 1894 William Hill has been through rebuilds (by Hill, Norman and Beard in 1930 and Harrison in 1981), while a fire in 2001 meant that more work had to be done then, and the booklet tells us that even now plans are afoot for yet more to be carried out. However, in the hands of Assistant Director of Music David Humphreys, it sounds, tonally at least, in pretty good shape.

A sprightly account of Parry's Fantasia and Fugue sets things off on a cheerful footing; Humphreys, through his beautifully deft phrasing and subtle handling of the instrument makes about as compelling a case for this piece as it has ever received on disc. The remainder of the programme reinforces this impression of a player with an undimmed sense of enthusiasm supported by a vibrant technique and an obvious fondness for this 85-stop organ, which he shows off to splendid effect.

English cathedral organs rarely convince in early English music – and Peterborough is no exception – but Humphreys seems particularly in tune with this area of the repertoire and in John Bull's *Salve regina* we have a performance which shines above the organ's rather solid sound. At the other end of the scale, Dupré's angular *Final* is delivered with such Gallic zeal that the blatant Englishness of the organ is quickly forgotten. My personal favourite in a disc full of delights is a perky and immensely charming account of a Schumann study. **Marc Rochester**

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# GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

## PIANIST ON MELO CLASSIC

**Bryce Morrison** listens to a selection of archival performances from the German label dedicated to restoring historic recordings

Melo Classic's newest selection of historic piano discs looks like a cornucopia of riches and is a reminder of pianists who have slipped through the radar as well as those who have stood the test of time. The recorded sound is naturally variable and the way the music is presented unsatisfactory (there are often no gaps between one item and another). The performances, too, can remind us how even the finest artists can have their off days, particularly when heard live, 'warts and all', without the safety net provided by a team of

editors. **Georges Cziffra** disdained all such aid, and on his disc after the too-well-behaved Beethoven, you meet what my late colleague Lionel Salter called 'those monstrous pianistic gimcracks'. In Paris it was claimed that Cziffra was 'greater than Horowitz' and, if there are distortions on a grand scale in Liszt's 10th *Transcendental Etude*, there are also wonders beyond price in the *Gnomenreigen* and a heavily embellished Sixth *Hungarian Rhapsody* – performances that will set even the most committed doubting Thomas's blood racing.

Turning from such extravagance to the **Wilhelm Kempff** disc is to enter a completely different, luminous world. Yet if he plays Rameau with all of his usual pointillist delicacy, the Beethoven and Schubert are disappointing. Nevertheless, Kempff would not be Kempff if his playing was not starred with moments of instantly recognisable beauty. The most startling performance of all is **Walter Giesecking's** Rachmaninov Second Piano Concerto, coupled with the Grieg. Late in his life this incomparable master of a thousand tints and hues in Debussy took to the Russian Romantics, to Tchaikovsky



Walter Giesecking: on the rampage in Rachmaninov on Melo Classic

and Rachmaninov, and, taking a break from his legendary myriad *pianissimos*, went on the rampage. Try the conclusion to the Second Concerto's finale and you will hear a sweep across the keyboard like so much rapidly torn paper followed by playing as unapologetically wild as any on record. None of this quite equals Giesecking's live recording of the Third Concerto's cadenza, where he becomes engulfed in his own flailing inaccuracy, but it nevertheless reflects an astonishing change of direction in his career. Eyebrows may rise at such thrills and spills but the manic excitement is undeniable.

**Alexander Uninsky** (1910-72), winner of Warsaw's 1932 Chopin Competition, quickly fell foul of Virgil Thomson's vitriolic gibes. His fluency was not matched by sufficient character, he complained (this from the critic who found Myra Hess 'not memorable like a love affair, but sensible, like a well-tailored suit'). Uninsky himself was notable for backhanded compliments: 'A gifted boy,' he said of Van Cliburn, 'he makes everything sound like Rachmaninov.' And so to Uninsky's Mozart, which is indeed fluent but also elegant and musicianly. His Liszt Sonata,

too, while hardly in the same league as the greatest interpreters of the work, offers an impressive blend of sense and sensibility. Not the sort of performance to draw you into every note but able and, again, musicianly. Uninsky's *Three Movements from Petrushka*, however, becomes increasingly convoluted and confused, while he has too little to say in the two Debussy *Préludes* he includes. In Prokofiev's Toccata, that steel-tipped show-stopper, there is much rhythmic inertia and technical weakness.

From then on it is downhill all the way. The lack of success of **Julian von Károlyi** (1914-93) on the competition circuit is understandable given the lack of musical focus and obsession with speed on display here. The recitative before the final cascade in Ravel's 'Ondine' is a giveaway, loud and unatmospheric, as if single as opposed to multiple notes were too simple to be of interest.

Finally, **Aline van Barentzen** (1897-1981), American-born but Paris-trained and a favourite pianist of Villa-Lobos. Brusque and relentless in Ravel (the *Sonatine*), she is clearly out of sorts with Chopin's Third Piano Sonata, where her way with the *Scherzo* would hardly have prompted the writer James Huneker to think it 'as light as a harebell'. And if there is a glimmer of eloquence in her performances of Beethoven's Sonatas Nos 8 and 14, it is hard to discern much beyond proficiency.

The discs are presented with full essays on the performers and are available online from the label's well-curated website, [meloclassic.com](http://meloclassic.com). **G**

## THE RECORDINGS

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  | <b>Beethoven. Liszt. Schumann</b> Pf Wks<br>Cziffra<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1014                      |
|  | <b>Beethoven et al</b> Pf Wks<br>Kempff<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1001                                  |
|  | <b>Grieg. Rachmaninov</b> Pf Concs<br>Giesecking; Hessian RSO / Schröder<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1000 |
|  | <b>Liszt et al</b> Pf Wks<br>Uninsky<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1009                                     |
|  | <b>Liszt</b> Pf Concs. Pf Wks<br>Károlyi; Berlin RSO / Schüler, Weigel<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1012   |
|  | <b>Beethoven et al</b> Pf Wks<br>Van Barentzen<br>Melo Classic (M) MC1021                           |

# Salvatore Sciarrino

Philip Clark celebrates the Italian composer whose music occupies the margins between the most fragile of sounds and silence

The composer saL!vaT.or()e SciarrrrRRRRRrrrrino's name holds the sounds of his music inside its rolling counterpoint of spongy vowels and oratorical consonants. Invariably, Sciarrino's music is hardly there. Flute harmonics crack at the margins of hearing, notes are pressed down on keyboards with the weight of a kitten chasing a ball of wool, and orchestras in Sciarrino's hands can sound fragile and feathery, as if Anton Bruckner had never happened. And yet, for all its tiptoeing delicacies, his music is prodigiously detailed, packed with event and itchy, restless energy.

In my diagrammatic representation of the composer's name the most significant symbols are those two brackets that outline white space, which if transferred to music would likely invoke silence. Because Sciarrino's rests are the most perfectly formed in new music. Typically a Sciarrino composition sets material in motion and then sets about torpedoing its progress. *Tremolandos* and trills sustain sound over time. His music leans on trills and ornaments as compositional filigree the way Philip Glass relies on the arpeggio, and yet circling these sustaining devices is a capricious network of miscellaneous pops, clicks and raspberries that, like an alert collie dog rounding up sheep, herd and worry the ornamental formality. And this maelstrom of activity often comes to rest around punctuating pockets of silence, short paragraphs that open up the space and give emphasis.

Like this one.

In stark contrast to John Cage's deployment of silence, Sciarrino's silences often feel like the result of cadences, either perfect or imperfect, that couldn't be bothered to turn up. Such obvious musical grammar can be more powerful when it is not explicitly stated and listeners' imaginations are left to hear what isn't there. And unlike Cage, Sciarrino is immersed in Western tradition. Born in Palermo in 1947, he is a generation (or two) younger than first-generation post-war Italian composers such as Luciano Berio, Bruno Maderna, Franco Donatoni, Luigi Nono, Aldo Clementi and Niccolò Castiglioni who collectively defined a bold and convincing Italian enclave of European modernism. The argument is often pressed that those florid melodic instrumental arias that are so intimately part of Donatoni's and Clementi's sound worlds relate to Italian operatic tradition, and that Sciarrino's own fluid textures owe much to their example. But Sciarrino has also clearly deduced from late-period Nono (typified by Nono's *Post-prae-ludium per Donau* and *Fragmente-Stille, an Diotima*) the purchase that can come with



Salvatore Sciarrino: his breakthrough work rewrote Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*

*'Typically a Sciarrino composition sets material in motion and then sets about torpedoing its progress'*

obliging listeners to deal with musical material in ways that might feel at first counterintuitive. The equation tends to be that busy sounds are loud sounds; in Sciarrino, that common understanding is turned against itself.

His breakthrough piece, *De la nuit* for solo piano, written in 1971, was generated by deconstructing Maurice Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*. Sciarrino shredded Ravel's original material and placed the fragments into a collage that mulched the syntax of *Gaspard's* original structure down into a trademark paradox. The music hardly pauses for breath as it surges forwards. For an exhilarating six minutes, Sciarrino keeps his borrowed material locked inside transformational flux. Through incongruity, as narrative discontinuity takes hold, scattering passagework and tumbling scales are transformed. By running together and overlapping his puréed slices of Ravel, Sciarrino trashes the original harmonic narrative – or, more precisely, his collage creates an objectified, atomised perspective on *Gaspard* which the human brain, left to its own devices, would have been unlikely to stumble across.

As he has explained, during a period when many of his contemporaries were measuring their own development against Webern and Schoenberg, Ravel meant more to him than the composer's assumed status as a mere figure of transition between the classical and modern words.





## SCIARRINO FACTS

**Born** Palermo, Italy, April 4, 1947

**Education** Mainly self-taught but attended Franco Evangelisti's courses in electronic composition at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia

**Career** Taught at the Milan Conservatoire during the 1970s, then on an ad hoc basis in Bologna and Florence

**Pupils** Pierluigi Billone, Lucia Ronchetti, Francesco Filidei

**Breakthrough work** *De la nuit*, premiered in 1971

**Definitive work** *Luci mie traditrici*, 1998

**On Sciarrino** 'Playing Sciarrino's music is as natural to me as breathing; it is a spontaneous and physiological process. Can you picture how it feels to lie under a tall tree, breathing calmly, not preoccupied at all with the passage of time, while pondering the passing of clouds?' (Flautist Mario Caroli)

**Sciarrino on Sciarrino** 'My music is like the eruption of a volcano viewed from afar.'

'He was more autonomous (than that),' Sciarrino has said, '(a composer) who found rigour and his own solutions which swam against the tide.'

Sciarrino, too, has found solutions to call his own. Information about his own musical education is kept, perhaps deliberately, vague. We know that he received a basic grounding in compositional technique from Turi Belfiore and Antonino Titone (both uber-obscure footnotes in the history of Italian music), and that he subsequently attended Franco Evangelisti's courses on electronic music at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. But beyond that we are told little. Sciarrino likes to stress that he is an autodidact who managed to find the music he needed to write quickly and painlessly. At the age of 15 he was a featured composer in the Palermo International New Music Week; *De la nuit* appeared when he was 24.

Memory plays such a central role in his music – as both active reminiscence about earlier music and compositional device, and the suspicion that we probably misremember as clearly as we remember – that Sciarrino's own 'missing' back-story has become wrapped into the narrative of his music. His 1981 work for voice and orchestra *Efebo con radio* ('Boy with radio') comes blessed with a touch of Ingmar Bergman's innocent childhood regained as sound-grabs of the music Sciarrino heard as a child on the radio are put next to extended instrumental scratching and hissing orchestrated to resemble static interference. This boy with a radio could, of course, be any of us. Sciarrino states that his compositional starting point was a systematic study of pop songs that became hit records, their harmonic hooks and sounds.

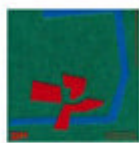
But equally important to the idea of how listeners back in the day perceived pop music is this prism of unstable medium-wave radio, crackles that bled inside vocal chords and blurred the neat rhythmic plod of drum patterns. We think we remember songs by The Beatles and The Rolling Stones but what we actually remember is their music mediated through radio and crackly vinyl.

Written 10 years later, *Allegoria della notte* similarly sieves sound from source. Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto is slid under the microscope as Sciarrino attempts to calibrate its melodic and harmonic DNA, which he extracts and makes coexist with fragments of Mendelssohn's original. And Sciarrino continues to mess with our perception of time even when there is no audible source. His 1997 orchestral piece *I fuochi oltre la ragione* ('Fires beyond reason') begins so quietly that you struggle to hear into its evolving textures. The music becomes progressively quieter and more dream-like but, magically, your ears begin to acclimatise; and the less sound and event Sciarrino gives you, the more you hear. Then a shock: a thunderous orchestral roar comes from nowhere and, with the ripples clearing, the music ticks as nervously as it ticks, while the material attempts to put itself back together.

The backbone of Sciarrino's work includes his piano sonatas and an ongoing series of pieces for solo flute, often written for Roberto Fabbricani, who was a regular collaborator of Nono's. It would be easy to assume that the Sciarrino project is largely an instrumental one – instruments as characters brought to life on the concert stage. But Sciarrino has opera running through his veins and his instrumental concerns have transferred seamlessly to opera. When, during the mid-1990s, he was working on his opera *Luci mie traditrici*, inspired by the Renaissance composer Carlo Gesualdo, and news reached him that Alfred Schnittke was writing an opera based on the same subject, the musical framework he had prepared stubbornly remained. The references to Gesualdo were cut and he parachuted in a different plot. Sciarrino would nevertheless subsequently compose his Gesualdo opera (*The Killing Flower*): if sound can be separated from source, apparently there is nothing to stop plot being severed from its intended sounds. 6

## RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

Three discs that open the door to Sciarrino's world



**Storie di altre storie. Efebo con radio, etc**

Sols; WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Kazushi Ono, Lucas Vis

Winter & Winter © 910 144-2 (2/09)

Orchestral wonders: *Storie di altre storie* jumbles together the shared histories of Machaut, Mozart and Scarlatti.



**Luci mie traditrici**

Sols; Klangforum Wien / Beat Furrer

Kairos © 0012222KAI

Sciarrino's opera based around Gesualdo whispers and fragments: unspoken horrors.



**De la nuit. Quattro notturni. Due notturni crudeli**

Ciro Longobardi pf

Stradivarius © STR33835

Thirty years separate Sciarrino's Ravel mash-up *De la nuit* from his *Due notturni*, with its sparse and fleeting gestures – a little night music.

# Vocal



Alexandra Coghlan on a live recital from Iestyn Davies:

*'Dunford's lute solos give this instinctive, expressive musician a chance to show his mettle'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 80



Fabrice Fitch explores music from turn-of-the-17th-century Prague:

*'The music's own reluctance to draw attention to itself might be considered a positive attribute'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 83

## Beethoven • Haydn • Mozart

**Beethoven** An die ferne Geliebte, Op 98.

Maigesang, Op 52 No 4. Sechs Gesänge, Op 75 – No 2, Neue Liebe, neues Leben; No 3, Mephistos Flohlied. Adelaide, Op 46. Selbstgespräch, WoO114. Resignation, WoO149. An die Hoffnung, Op 94. Abendlied unter'm gestirnten Himmel, WoO150 **Haydn** She never told her love, HobXXVIa/34. The Spirit's Song, HobXXVIa/41. The Boatman, HobXXXIa/246 **Mozart** Das Veilchen, K476. Abendempfindung an Laura, K523. Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls, K619

**Mark Padmore** *ten* **Kristian Bezuidenhout** *fp*  
 Harmonia Mundi © HMU90 7611 (70' • DDD • T/t)



An English Peter Schreier, albeit with a sweeter timbre, Mark Padmore combines an

acute intelligence with an unvarnished directness in all he sings. In symbiotic partnership with fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout, Padmore 'lives' all of these songs, noticing everything, exaggerating nothing. For Haydn's 'The Spirit's Song' he finds an ideal numb, blanched colour, intoning the final 'my spirit wanders free' in a fearful whisper. And how vividly the extreme tonal contrasts of the fortepiano – fragile, bell-like treble, resonant, faintly muffled bass – contribute to the song's eerie atmosphere. Padmore is an eager and touching story-teller in Mozart's 'Das Veilchen', where any hint of coyness can be fatal, and is urgent rather than dreamy in 'Abendempfindung'. In many performances of this song the pianist ripples away discreetly in the background. Making telling use of the *sordino* pedal, Bezuidenhout colours and voices the arpeggio patterns to create an eloquent voice-piano duet.

In Mozart's Masonic cantata *Die ihr des unermesslichen Weltalls* Padmore, typically, dramatises rather than merely relates, building to a fervent final climax. Each of the Beethoven songs, whether familiar or little-known, is thoughtfully, specifically characterised. Padmore balances graceful

shaping and exuberant abandon in 'Mailed' and 'Neue Liebe'. He nicely judges the sardonic malice of the 'Song of the Flea' from *Faust* and spins a liquid *bel canto* line at the opening of the popular 'Adelaide', one of several songs here to benefit from the original tenor key. Elsewhere Padmore responds to the varied moods of the quasi-operatic 'An die Hoffnung' and the valedictory 'Abendlied unterm gestirnten Himmel' with a spectrum of colours ranging from tenderly floated head tones to declamatory fierceness.

In *An die ferne Geliebte* Padmore and Bezuidenhout catch naturally, unfussily, the oscillations between stillness and excited anticipation, dream and desire. This is a true dialogue between voice and keyboard, as it should be. Among many felicities are the otherworldly remoteness of the second song, before the sudden flare of passion at the end, and the hushed, *innig* opening of the final song. Bezuidenhout sensitively times and colours the mediating interludes between the songs, and uses the timbres of the fortepiano to bring out the cycle's pictorial detail, not least the mysterious twilight haze near the close. Harmonia Mundi's recording picks up too much of the hall's empty resonance. But singing and playing are so compelling that I quickly adjusted. **Richard Wigmore**

## Cour

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.  
 Cantio Mariae. A good shepherd is my saviour.  
 The great master is coming. Three Intermezzi.  
 Vesper Organi. Wings  
**Trinitatis Kantori / Søren Christian Vestergaard**  
 with **Bine Bryndorf** *org*  
 Dacapo © 8 224725 (63' • DDD)



Listening to this disc gives you the impression that Niels la Cour is a composer who writes with an earnest sincerity, which lies midway between the objective crafting of harmony and counterpoint and

subjective poetic fervour. The result is highly approachable music, which is always user-friendly to performers and listeners. La Cour's harmonic language is basically tonal but with hints of the sensual richness of composers such as Herbert Howells.

The clarity of la Cour's choral textures is well conveyed by Trinitatis Kantori, and their conductor Søren Christian Vestergaard directs performances of dignity and restraint. The *legato* phrasing, combined with the warmth of the adult voices, makes for comfortable listening. For me, the best of the choral works is the expressive *Cantio Mariae*, particularly the moving 'Stabat mater'. I would say that this composition is as fine as any other 20th-century European choral repertoire.

The two organ works are equally suitable to be played at concerts or acts of worship, and their clear-cut writing is well suited to the 1953 Marcussen organ in the Trinitatis Church in Copenhagen. It's a three-manual, 53-stop instrument and its 'neo-classical' sounds take the Baroque era as an inspiration, although there are some more Romantic stops available. Bine Bryndorf's impeccable performances include some colourful and imaginative registrations, hinting at the Gallic sound world of Alain, Messiaen and Tournemire.

This disc offers a fascinating glimpse into the modern Danish choral and organ culture, and listeners may find it a refreshing change from the usual catalogue of British, French and American composers. La Cour's skills as a composer, plus the committed performances of choir and organist, give us a very enjoyable disc. **Christopher Nickol**

## Graupner • Heinichen • Telemann

**Graupner** Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust, GWV1147 **Heinichen** Canticum Simeonis **Telemann** Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen, TVWV7/17, Ouverture, TWV55:Es4  
**Veronika Winter** *sop* **Alex Potter** *countertenor*  
**Hans Jörg Mammel** *ten* **Markus Flaig** *bass*  
**L'Arpa Festante / Rien Voskuilen**  
 Carus © CARUS83 337 (78' • DDD)





Telemann claimed that while a law student he composed a psalm for St Thomas's every fortnight. His earliest extant sacred work, *Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen*, was probably composed around 1703, and the pattern-based construction of six concise movements reveals Telemann has already cultivated a fondness for contrasting textures using simple means and an uncanny awareness of tuneful vocal writing and delicate rhetorical effects.

Christoph Graupner's *Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust* (presumably composed for Darmstadt before 1711) is scored for solo soprano, two recorders, two muted violins and two 'violettas'. L'Arpa Festante's softly lyrical playing and Winter's shapely singing reveal abundant melodious charm and an appealing sense of pastoral instrumental colour in Graupner's setting of the same Lehms poem that Bach used in 1726 for his sublime alto cantata (No 170).

Proceedings conclude with Heinichen's modern madrigal-form cantata *Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener*, which is a Lutheran treatment of Simeon's *Nunc dimittis* for the Feast of the Purification of Mary. Probably composed around 1709, when the former Thomasschule pupil was composer at the opera house and director of the town's collegium musicum, its centrepiece slow aria is sung consolingly by Hans Jörg Mammel in dialogue with Christoph Hesse's tender violin obbligato. These excellent performances remind us how many of the finest Saxonian Baroque composers had close ties with the university town long before Bach turned up in 1723.

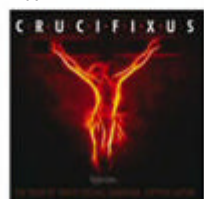
David Vickers

## Leighton

'Crucifixus'

Magnificat & Nunc dimittis, 'Collegium Magdalenae Oxoniense'. God's Grandeur. Give me the wings of faith. Missa brevis, Op 50. Missa de Gloria, Op 82 - Ite, missa est. What love of this is thine?. The Second Service, Op 62. Crucifixus pro nobis, Op 38<sup>a</sup>

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge / Stephen Layton with <sup>a</sup>Andrew Kennedy ten  
Jeremy Cole, Eleanor Kornas org  
Hyperion © CDA68039 (72' • DDD • T/t)



Kenneth Leighton's remarkably consistent musical style means that his characteristic

traits, such as extensive use of chromaticism and syncopation, plus intricate counterpoint, are ever present. However, anyone expecting his music to sound all the same should listen to the two radically different settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. The adventurous harmonic language often leads to tonal ambiguity, and one feels that the calm repose of a simple quiet major/minor chord is only reached via a troubled musical journey.

The uncompromising complexity of Leighton's music presents severe challenges to singers and organists but The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge cast these aside with performances of unsurpassed excellence. Under the experienced direction of Stephen Layton, their articulation and phrasing are always faithful to the texts, and the composer's detailed markings are meticulously observed. High praise is also due to tenor Andrew Kennedy (soloist in the *Crucifixus pro nobis*), and organists Jeremy Cole and Eleanor Kornas.

My only reservation with this disc is the resonant acoustic of Lincoln Cathedral, which sometimes reduces clarity in works which include the organ. Despite the best efforts of singers and organists, fast and loud passages become somewhat muddled in the vast spaces, and listeners may prefer the clearer, more transparent recording by the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, on Naxos. Under Christopher Robinson's direction, their singing is consistently first-rate; however, the emotional intensity of the Trinity College singers places their performances in a class of their own. Hyperion's richer and warmer sound also gives their disc the edge over the Naxos CD; it may well turn out to be one of the finest choral recordings I'll hear this year.

Christopher Nickol

Selected comparison:

*Ch of St John's Coll, Cambridge, Robinson*  
(3/04) (NAXO) 8 555795

## Marenzio

Quinto libro de madrigali a sei voci

La Compagnia del Madrigale with

Elena Biscuola mez

Glossa © GCD922804 (64' • DDD • T/t)



Marenzio's *Quinto libro di madrigali a sei voci* (1591) was dedicated to his Roman patron

Virginio Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, a pupil of Cavalieri, friend of Caccini, and quite possibly Shakespeare's inspiration for the music-loving Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. The madrigals celebrated the duke's

## GRAMOPHONE Archive

### An die ferne Geliebte

Three earlier tenor recordings of Beethoven's song-cycle - and how Gramophone rated them



AUGUST 1996

Beethoven *An die ferne Geliebte*

Peter Schreier ten

András Schiff pf

Decca © 444 817-2DH (74' • DDD)

Take the final lines of the fifth song: the pair fill words and notes with such meaning that you can feel the falling of the tears being mentioned in the text. Then, in the final song, time seems to stand still in the couplet beginning 'Und sein letzter Strahl verglühet...'. If we are occasionally aware that Schreier's tone is no longer that of a young tenor, we are consoled by his increased understanding of every facet of his contributions.

Alan Blyth



DECEMBER 2010

Beethoven *An die ferne Geliebte*

James Gilchrist ten

Anna Tilbrook pf

Orchid © ORC100013 (67' • DDD)

This is an exceptionally fine performance on the part of both singer and pianist. Anna Tilbrook plays with a touch that seems infallibly to discover the right balances for accompanying figures and melodic strands. For his part, Gilchrist is wonderfully skilful in leading his voice through awkward places and sensitive in the modulation of his tones. He encompasses all moods in Beethoven's mini-cycle.

John Steane



AWARDS 2014

Beethoven *An die ferne Geliebte*

Julian Prégardien ten

Christoph Schnackertz pf

Myrios © MYR012 (60' • DDD)

Beethoven's exquisite

song-cycle immediately proclaims the 30-year-old tenor's Lieder credentials: a gentle lyrical timbre, plus an unforced sensitivity to text (a chip off the old block here) and the cycle's oscillations between reverie and excited urgency. The opening song is tender and *innig*, while the second exudes a mesmerised stillness. Prégardien catches, too, the sudden yearning at the end of the delicately dancing No 5 and sounds truly exultant at the cycle's close. In his crucial mediating role, pianist Christoph Schnackertz is limpid and rhythmically alert, if slightly too discreet for my taste.

Richard Wigmore

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recent marriage to Flavia Peretti; their names are mentioned explicitly in the softly affectionate opener 'Leggiadrissima eterna Primavera'. Their marriage was also commemorated by the publication of poems by Tasso, whose sensual verses 'Amatemi ben mio' and 'Nel dolce seno della bella Clori' receive enthralling performances by La Compagnia del Madrigale. Marenzio's clever mastery of polyphony and appealing word-painting are crystal-clear in the evocations of wandering in a pastoral paradise and the sound of a thousand mellifluous birds in 'Ecco che 'l ciel a noi chiaro e sereno'.

It is no mean feat that this recording has been produced by the singers themselves, and engineered by their fully participating tenor Giuseppe Maletto. Self-critical perspective is clearly not a problem for these artists, who freely reorganise Marenzio's madrigals into a sequence different from the original published order, and three additional madrigals are included from contemporaneous mixed anthologies. Marenzio placed his 16-minute setting of the poet Guarini's canzone 'Baci soavi e cari' near the end of the book but here it forms the emotional centrepiece of the recording: the unfurling description of a lover's kisses permit all kinds of glorious opportunities for the singers' seemingly telepathic understanding for chiaroscuro, impeccable tuning and innate grammatical sense. Lively antiphonal exchanges between the three upper and three lower voices in 'Leggiadre ninfe e pastorelli amanti' demonstrate their senses for harmonic shape and texture. Suffering, grief and melancholy are less conspicuous in this particular collection but are articulated beautifully in the book's final piece, 'Vivrò dunque lontano', as each piercingly sweet dissonance resolves smoothly into blissful concord. **David Vickers**

## M Martin

Jubilate Deo. Festival Anthem, 'In the year that King Uziah died (I saw the Lord)'. Christe redemptor omnium. Chester Missa brevis. Te lucis ante terminum. St John's College Service. Justorum animae. Dormi, Jesu. A Hymn of St Ambrose. A Short Mass of St Dominic. A Song of the New Jerusalem. Laudate Dominum **Choir of Magdalen College, Oxford / Daniel Hyde** with **Stephen Farr** *org*  
Opus Arte © OACD9030D (71' • DDD)



The music of Matthew Martin (b1976) is haunted by the spirits of British composers

who died while he was in his teens – Berkeley, Howells, Leighton, Mathias – but more especially by Britten, who died the year he was born. Indeed, the first part of the extended anthem composed for the 2012 St David's Festival, *In the year that King Uziah died*, bears more than a passing resemblance to *Rejoice in the Lamb*, although elsewhere Martin skilfully mixes his influences to create music which has both a comforting familiarity and a distinctive voice.

It helps Martin's cause enormously that this disc of his church music mostly composed within the last five years has been made by the choir of the same Oxford college at which he is currently a tutor, and is directed by one of his colleagues. But while such cosy inter-relationships might in other spheres seem a convenient way of exchanging favours, here it produces a vivid artistic chemistry which results in performances of potent conviction and impressive authority. The Magdalen choir certainly make an exceptional sound, and Daniel Hyde's direction is notable for his attention to inner detail and clear sense of architecture, whether in the electrifying canticles written in 2011 for St John's College, Cambridge, the simple, direct setting of *Christe redemptor omnium* or the exuberant *Jubilate Deo*.

Superb recorded sound from Opus Arte adds lustre to a recording of an outstanding choir singing music which, in continuing an age-old tradition, also adds something new and distinctive to it. **Marc Rochester**

## Mayr

Jacob a Labano fugiens  
**Siri Karoline Thornhill, Andrea Lauren Brown, Gunhild Lang-Alsvik, Katharina Ruckgaber** *sops*  
**Julie Comparini** *mez* **Simon Mayr Chorus and Ensemble / Franz Hauk**  
Naxos © 8 573237 (79' • DDD)



Simon Mayr (1763–1845) had a dependability that kept him immune

to the inspirational ups and downs and empty note-spinning of some of his contemporaries. Though premiered in Venice in the year of Mozart's death, *Jacob's Flight from Laban* might be likened, harmonically and dramatically, to pre-*Idomeneo* Mozart. Flights of occasional brilliance are heard within a generalised ability to meet the dramatic challenges of the material at hand.

Though Mayr operates with compelling source material hold their own on the

modern stage, this oratorio seems more distant, presuming that listeners come to the piece with an interest in the somewhat musty Old Testament episode in which Jacob breaks with his uncle Laban, and the inner conflicts of Jacob's wife Rachel. Anja Morgenstern's excellent notes tell us of provocative departures from the biblical plotlines that one probably wouldn't notice in the piece's steady-as-she-goes narrative. All roles are sung by females, though there's little gender differentiation in the character of the vocal lines.

Recitatives have a respectable level of dramatic heat. Elsewhere, the composer seems hesitant to burden his audience with much psychological darkness. In Rachel's aria 'Per loca incerta obscura', for example, the 'dark places in misery' sound like a walk in the park. Then again in such moments, one can count on an obbligato, a modulation to the minor or a formidable brass entrance that retrieves one's ear and reminds one that, on its own terms, there is inspirational vitality here.

Conductor/harpsichordist Franz Hauk's Mayr advocacy is more about respect than passion. Mayr's coloratura writing, in particular, could be more exciting when sung at a higher velocity. And he has the kind of cast that could handle it. All the singers were new to me; they are all extremely capable and alert to whatever morsels of characterisation come their way. The title-role singers – Siri Karoline Thornhill as Laban and Julie Comparini as Jacob – rightly dominate the recording, both summoning implied masculinity from the darker colours of their respective voices. Yet even a minor role such as the Shepherd is charmingly rendered by Katharina Ruckgaber. **David Patrick Stearns**

## Rachmaninov

Vespers (All-Night Vigil), Op 37  
**Julia Scozzafava** *mez* **Frank Fleischner** *ten* **Phoenix Choral; Kansas City Chorale / Charles Bruffy**  
Chandos © CHSA5148 (76' • DDD/DSD • T/T)



The commercial recording history of Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* stretches back only 50 years, with at least three outstanding versions having been released in the past three years. Now, in its centenary year, comes this collaboration between two top-flight Grammy Award-winning chamber choirs based 1200 miles apart, in Phoenix, Arizona and Kansas City. They share an Artistic Director, Charles Bruffy, a former tenor soloist with the





Stickler for counterpoint: Franz Xaver Richter is brought to life by members of the Czech Ensemble Baroque Choir and Orchestra

doyen of American choral conductors, Robert Shaw.

The combined 56 voices are beautifully balanced and set back at some distance from the microphones in the cavernous acoustic of the Cathedral of St Peter the Apostle in Kansas City. Intonation is spot-on throughout this taxing work and there are no audible edits. In addition to coaxing an ultra-smooth blend to the choral sound Bruffy has also – by disregarding a fair number of Rachmaninov's markings – rubbed off some of the crispness of articulation which this mostly slow music surely demands. This is a chromium-plated interpretation, made almost glacial at times by the adopting of lower-than-expected metronomic speeds. Bruffy manages to make the *Vigil* stretch to over 75 minutes. Compare this with the Netherlands Radio Choir, under Kaspars Putniņš, who dispatch the piece in just under 52 minutes. Full marks, though, to the splendid soloists, especially Julia Scozzafava, whose alto solo sounds like the genuine article. **Malcolm Riley**

*Selected comparison:*

*Netherlands Rad Ch, Putniņš (7/14) (BIS) BIS2039*

## FX Richter

*De profundis* a 12. *Messa de Requiem* a 16. *Sinfonia con fuga* in G minor

**Lenka Cafourková** *Đuricová sop* **Markéta Cukrová** *contr* **Romain Champion** *ten* **Jiří Miroslav**

**Procházka** *bass* **Czech Ensemble Baroque Choir and Orchestra / Roman Válek**

Supraphon © SU4177-2 (64' • DDD)



The Moravian-born composer Franz Xaver Richter (1709-89) is one of those 'pre-Classical' figures whose music is written about more than it is heard, with what interest there has been focusing squarely on his symphonies: as a member of the 'Mannheim School' he is remembered for his contribution to the early development of the genre, albeit one with a conservative but not unattractive attachment to properly written counterpoint.

What, however, of his church music? Richter spent the last 20 years of his life at Strasbourg Cathedral, where he produced around 80 sacred works which are almost wholly unexplored today. As this release shows, they certainly don't lack quality. The main work is the Requiem composed in the last year of his life, its 16 short but rich-textured movements mixing assured choral writing (some fine fugues included)

and vocally grateful solos. In this last regard it is less like Mozart's Requiem (composed two years later) than his C minor Mass, while in atmosphere it has very little of the Mozart's anxiousness and dread. Though there is mild trembling in the 'Dies irae' and a touch of awe at 'death and nature shall marvel', the overall mood is one of confidence, more untroubled farewell to earthly life than vision of Hell. An interesting touch comes at the opening: a brief *a cappella* intonation of 'Requiem' joined to a subdued trumpet fanfare before the works starts in earnest. The disc also includes an eloquent *De profundis* and a rather lopsided symphony whose 13-minute opening fugue is followed by two much shorter and more conventionally *galant* movements.

The performances by all-Czech period forces are competent, well-shaped and stylish. If you are interested in the music, you'll be content with them. The church acoustic takes away much chance of making the music bite but helps create an imposing, dignified yet unclogged sound.

**Lindsay Kemp**

## R Strauss

*'The Complete Songs, Vol 7'*

*Fünf Lieder, Op 47 - No 1, Auf ein Kind<sup>b</sup>; No 3,*

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Rückleben<sup>c</sup>; No 5. Von den sieben Zechbrüdern<sup>b</sup>. Abend- und Morgenrot, TrV60<sup>a</sup>. Alphorn, TrV64<sup>ad</sup>. Die Drossel, TrV49<sup>a</sup>. Durch allen Schall und Klang, TrV251<sup>b</sup>. Einkehr, TrV3<sup>a</sup>. Der Fischer, TrV48<sup>b</sup>. Husarenlied, TrV42<sup>c</sup>. Im Walde, TrV62<sup>b</sup>. Lass ruhn die Toten, TrV50<sup>c</sup>. Lust und Qual, TrV51<sup>a</sup>. Der müde Wanderer, TrV16<sup>c</sup>. Nebel, TrV65<sup>c</sup>. Ein Röslein zog ich mir im Garten, TrV67<sup>a</sup>. Sankt Michael, Op 88 No 3<sup>c</sup>. Sinnspruch, TrV239<sup>b</sup>. Soldatenlied, TrV66<sup>c</sup>. Spielmann und Zither, TrV58<sup>b</sup>. Waldesgesang, TrV75 No 1<sup>a</sup>. Weihnachtsgefühl, TrV198<sup>c</sup>. Weihnachtslied, TrV2<sup>a</sup>. Wiegenlied, TrV59<sup>a</sup>. Winterreise, TrV4<sup>c</sup>. Xenion, TrV282<sup>b</sup>. Zugemessne Rhythmen, TrV269<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Ruby Hughes *sop* <sup>b</sup>Ben Johnson *ten*

<sup>c</sup>Günter Haumer *bar* <sup>d</sup>Ed Lockwood *hn*

Roger Vignoles *pf*

Hyperion © CDA68074 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Unlike the earlier mix-and-match releases in Hyperion's Strauss song survey, this disc

consists entirely of less popular works, opening with the 19 'Jugendlieder' published posthumously in 1964. The beautiful 'Weihnachtsgefühl' actually dates from 1899; the rest – starting with the six-year-old Strauss's 'Weihnachtslied' – date from the 1870s.

They demonstrate astonishing early talent but it would be unfair to expect them to step much beyond fluent emulation of the standard Schubertian and Schumannesque models: they don't, even if there are some charming touches (the extended birdsong introduction to 'Die Drossel') and signs of ambition in the longer, ballade-like numbers. There's also special biographical interest in 'Alphorn', which includes a horn part for his father, but it's not really matched by musical interest.

The eight remaining songs on the disc are a motley collection: four epigrammatic Goethe miniatures and three Uhland settings from 1900 are followed by the strange, would-be heroism and nationalism of 'Sankt Michael' (1942), the only one of the three Op 88 songs left out by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in his survey with Gerald Moore (EMI – now Warner).

The three young singers turn in perfectly decent performances but comparison with Fischer-Dieskau's performances of the Uhland songs reveals what greater experience brings to those. Ruby Hughes's bright soprano is appealing but I find Günter Haumer's burnished, oaken baritone a touch stiff and opaque. Ben Johnson sings intelligently but his tenor

lacks authority, focus and upper-range security. Roger Vignoles offers eloquent accompaniment but this release feels, perhaps understandably, more dutiful than inspired. **Hugo Shirley**

## 'Fleurs'

**L Boulanger** Les lilas qui avaient fleuri **Britten**

The Poet's Echo, Op 76 – No 4, The Nightingale and the Rose **Chabrier** Toutes les fleurs!

**Debussy** Proses lyriques – No 3, De fleurs **Fauré** Four Songs, Op 39 – No 2, Fleur jetée; No 4, Les roses d'Ispahan. Le papillon et la fleur, Op 1 No 1

**Gounod** Le temps des roses **Hahn** Offrande

**Poulenc** Fleurs **Purcell** Pausanias, Z585 –

Sweeter than roses (arr Britten) **Quilter** Seven

Elizabethan Lyrics, Op 12 – No 3, Damask Roses

**Schubert** Die Blumensprache, D519. Im Haine,

D738 **Schumann** Die Blume der Ergebung,

Op 83 No 2. Jasminenstrauch, Op 27 No 4.

Meine Rose, Op 90 No 2. Röslein, Röslein!,

Op 89 No 6. Schneeglöckchen, Op 79 No 27

**R Strauss** Mädchenblumen, Op 22. Das

Rosenband, Op 36 No 1

**Carolyn Sampson** *sop* **Joseph Middleton** *pf*

BIS © BIS2102 (69' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Amid a clutch of floral favourites – say, Purcell's 'Sweeter than roses' (in Britten's

flamboyant arrangement), Schumann's 'Jasminenstrauch' and Fauré's 'Les roses d'Ispahan' – Carolyn Sampson and Joseph Middleton range well off the beaten track to embrace such rarities as Lili Boulanger's dreamy, liquescent 'Les lilas qui avaient fleuri' and Strauss's beguiling *Mädchenblumen* songs. Always a lovely Baroque singer, Sampson vividly suggests the mounting erotic excitement of 'Sweeter than roses', often sung merely as a sweet love song. But with hints of deeper colours in her vernal soprano, she is hardly less persuasive in Romantic song. She sings Schubert's 'Die Blumensprache' and 'Im Haine' with fresh, smiling tone, gracefully negotiating the ornamental turns and melismas. To Schumann's fragile, self-communing miniatures she brings an ideal delicacy and *Innigkeit*, not least in the gently floated high notes and magical *pianissimo* close of the rare 'Die Blume der Ergebung'. Here and elsewhere Middleton creates limpid, luminous textures and reveals a subtle feeling for Schumannesque *rubato*.

If Sampson sounds slightly stretched by the climax of 'Mohnblumen', most extrovert of the *Mädchenblumen* songs, her silver-spun lines and radiance *in alt* make for enchanting performances of

'Kornblumen', with its long, Italianate cantilena, and the mysterious 'Wasserrose'. In Britten's unquiet Pushkin setting 'The Nightingale and the Rose' her purity of timbre and relative restraint are just as moving as the more unbridled performance by Vishnevskaya and Rostropovich (Decca, 6/70). In French song, too, Sampson is in her element, whether in the blithe, seductive grace of Gounod's 'Le temps des roses' or the hothouse torpor of Debussy's 'De fleurs', where she and Middleton respond sensitively to the sultry, shifting harmonies. After so much languor and wistfulness, the mingled passion and playful mockery – nicely caught by Sampson – of Chabrier's 'Toutes les fleurs!' provides a delectable envoi to an imaginatively planned, beautifully executed recital that charms and touches by turns.

**Richard Wigmore**

## 'Flight of Angels'

'Music from the Golden Age in Spain'

**Guerrero** Duo Seraphim a 12. Laudate Dominum a 8. Maria Magdalene. Missa Congratulamini mihi – Agnus Dei. Missa de la batalla escoutez – Credo. Missa Surge propera – Gloria. Vexilla regis **Lobo** Ave Maria a 8. Ave regina caelorum. Libera me. Missa Maria Magdalene – Kyrie. Versa est in luctum

**The Sixteen** / **Harry Christophers**

Coro © COR16128 (64' • DDD)



The music of Spain's Golden Age has always been near to Harry Christophers's heart,

a commitment that shines through in this new recording. The careers of Francisco Guerrero and Alonso Lobo were closely intertwined, the younger Lobo serving as Guerrero's assistant at Seville before returning there some years after the latter's death. Mass movements and motets by both composers are interspersed on this disc, whose predominantly sunny tone is tempered only by a couple of selections of funeral music, including Lobo's famous *Versa est in luctum*, which is very well managed, restrained but without a sentimentality that would jar with the rest of the collection. The way Lobo's *Kyrie* and Guerrero's *Agnus Dei* bookend each other perfectly though they are taken from different Masses says much for the homogeneity and coherence of the programming.

That The Sixteen's current run of form stretches back a few years is attested by the *Credo* of Guerrero's *Missa de la batalla*, recorded back in 2009, which doesn't

sound markedly different from the rest of the disc, recorded last November. Most of the music is written for at least six voices (usually more), a richness of texture to which The Sixteen respond admirably: the textures remain lucid and legible throughout. The only conspicuous 'wrong note' occurs right at the start, in the opening motet, Guerrero's setting of *Duo Seraphim*, whose introductory duo is uncertain both in tone and intonation. It's a slightly odd piece, too, seeming to end almost in mid-phrase before a perfunctory 'Amen'. Apart from this uncharacteristic miscalculation, a very fine disc.

**Fabrice Fitch**

## 'Flow My Tears'

**Campion** I care not for these ladies. Never weather-beaten sail **Danyel** Mrs ME Her funeral tears for the death of her husband. Why canst thou not? Can doleful notes **Dowland** Can she excuse my wrongs. Come again, sweet love doth now invite. A Fancy. Flow my tears. The Frog Galliard. In darkness let me dwell. Now, O now I needs must part. Preludium **Hume** The First Part of Ayres – Loves Farewell; A Souldiers Galliard; A Souldiers Resolution **R Johnson** Care-charming sleep. From the famous peak of Derby. Have you seen the bright lily grow? **Muhly** Old Bones

**Iestyn Davies** *countertenor*

**Thomas Dunford** *lute* **Jonathan Manson** *viol*  
Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0074 (77' • DDD • T/I)  
Recorded live, July 5, 2013



Launched with 2014's 'The Art of Melancholy' (Hyperion, 7/14),

the partnership between young lutenist Thomas Dunford and countertenor Iestyn Davies is an exciting one – each matching and challenging the virtuosity of the other, and bringing youthful new life to the genre. But while 'The Art of Melancholy' focused solely on Dowland, Davies's latest disc (and his third for Wigmore Hall Live) takes a broader look at the repertoire, taking in music by Robert Johnson, John Danyel and Thomas Campion.

Inevitably there are some overlaps; five tracks (some quarter of 'Melancholy') are duplicated here in live performances, recorded with all the clarity and colour we now expect from the Wigmore's engineers. The Hyperion disc edges it for poise (with some slightly more measured tempi), but there's an urgency to the Wigmore recordings that will appeal to some, as well as a performance of 'Flow my tears' that's up with the very finest on disc – cobweb-

fragile but with the same tensile strength through its melodic strands.

Though the mood is dominantly (and predictably) sombre, chiefly thanks to a sequence of John Danyel songs, their harmonies tortured and twisted into Gesualdo-like contortions, there are some sunnier moments. The opener – Robert Johnson's 'Have you seen the bright lily grow?' – is exquisite, and his 'From the famous peak of Derby' brings some welcome irreverence to proceedings, while Dunford's solos give this instinctive, expressive musician a chance to show his mettle.

The highlight, however – reason alone to buy the disc – is the world premiere recording of Nico Muhly's *Old Bones*. Inspired by the discovery of Richard III's skeleton, and written for Davies, the song has an elegiac, Brittenish quality, uniting its collage of texts with a flow of quasi-conversational melody that sits somewhere between recitative and song. It's music that haunts the ear and lingers in the mind – the best PR Richard III has had in a long time.

**Alexandra Coghlan**

## 'Good Friday in Jerusalem'

'Medieval Byzantine Chant from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre'

**Cappella Romana**

Cappella Romana © CR413CD (75' • DDD)



It would be difficult to find a group more steeped in serious musicological research

than Cappella Romana, and their discs of music of the Byzantine tradition (mainly medieval chant but also modern, related works) have, as a result, a general sense of quiet elegance and authority. Their recording of music for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is no exception, and as such is one that not only stands up as a sound world of unique beauty but as a reference for composers writing into their music an influence that is constantly expanding and changing. That this is niche repertoire is undeniable but it is also certain that the context Cappella Romana give it is thrilling beyond its academic value on the page.

Much of it untouched for half a millennium, and its exact usage given careful attention in the booklet-notes, this very simple music can easily become a visual experience, rather than a purely aural one. The group's previous projects have involved the recreation of specific acoustics (in particular those of Hagia Sophia in

Istanbul) – effects that are deeply moving and evocative – and that, combined with the graphic nature of this music, leaves this disc feeling oddly incomplete when recorded in the more sterile surroundings of Stanford Memorial Church. Despite that, though, it is hard not to feel that the work this group is doing is not only presenting music that has a veneer of inaccessibility in a way that releases its particular beauty but also allowing it to bloom and continue to evolve. **Caroline Gill**

## 'Green'

'Melodies françaises on Verlaine's Poems'

**Bordes** O triste, triste était mon ame.

Promenade Sentimental **Brassens** Colombine

**Canteloube** Colloque sentimental **Caplet** Green

**Chabrier** Fisch-Ton-Kan – Qui je suis, qui je suis;

J'engraisse **Chausson** Ecoutez la chanson bien

douce. La lune blanche **Debussy** Claire de lune.

Colloque sentimental. En sourdine. Fantoches.

Ariettes oubliées – No 2, Il pleure dans mon

coeur; No 5, Green. La faune. Les ingénus.

Mandoline **Fauré** Cinq Mélodies, Op 58 – No 1,

Mandoline; No 2, En sourdine; No 3, Green; No 5,

C'est l'extase languoureuse. Clair de lune, Op 46

No 2. Spleen, Op 51 No 3. La lune blanche luit

dans les bois, Op 61 No 3. Prison, Op 83 No 1

**Ferré** Colloque sentimentale. Ecoutez la

chanson bien douce **Hahn** Chanson de

l'automne. D'une prison. En sourdine. L'heure

exquise **Honegger** Un grand sommeil noir

**Koechlin** Il pleure dans mon coeur, Op 22 No 4

**Massenet** Révons c'est l'heure **Saint-Saëns** Le

vent dans la plaine **F Schmitt** Il pleure dans mon

coeur **Severac** Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit...

**Szulc** Clair de lune, Op 83 No 1 **Trenet** Chanson

d'automne **Varèse** Un grand sommeil noir

**Wieniawska** Mandoline. La lune blanche.

En sourdine

**Philippe Jaroussky** *countertenor* with

**Nathalie Stutzmann** *contr*

**Jérôme Ducros** *pf* **Ebène Quartet**

Erato © B 2564 61669-3 (111' • DDD • T/I)



Philippe Jaroussky clearly subscribes to the habit-forming appeal of French art

song, having titled his first recorded recital 'Opium', and now with a much larger and more ambitious two-disc set named after absinthe. Intoxicating? Utterly. Delirious? Not at all. Everything about this set – song selection, sequencing and lavish packaging – is meticulously thought out in what may be the single most appealing and important French song recital this side of the largely excellent but sometimes uneven Fauré and Debussy discs on Hyperion. At the outset, one must give up expectations of hearing



the velvety tones of Gérard Souzay or Maggie Teyte. Jaroussky is best comparable to Natalie Dessay: the sound itself hasn't great dimension but shows every sign of meeting the expressive demands of his considerable imagination – and with more confidence and precision than in the 'Opium' recital. But just as Jaroussky has clearly put much consideration and thought to this collection, so must the listener.

More popular Verlaine poems – 'En sourdine', 'Clair de lune', 'Green' and 'Colloque sentimental' – are heard in two or three versions. But since this is an album to be enjoyed rather than an academic exercise, sensible sequencing is the first priority and means that the different versions are sprinkled throughout the two discs. The booklet contains all text translations but they are printed in alphabetical order rather than in the order of the disc.

I skipped around the discs to hear the often diametrically opposed approaches to the same poem, frequently being torn between preferring one over the other, so convincing are so many of the songs on their own terms. Musical responses indeed depart from the composer's better-known output: no flowing Auvergne melodies come from Canteloube in 'Colloque sentimental', a version that addresses the poem's contrasting voices literally, though always poetically.

'Prison' shows Fauré dispensing with his usual veneer with unguarded expressions of unresolved anguish while Hahn concentrates on the exterior simplicity of the village life described in the poem. Koechlin's version of 'Il pleure dans mon coeur' has eloquent simplicity and depth, though Schmitt maintains a questionably urbane surface while Debussy puts the song in a poetically ambiguous netherworld.

Certain patterns emerge: in the settings of 'En sourdine', Fauré frames his flowing word-settings with familiar musical devices (arpeggios, etc) while Debussy has vocal lines of a similar character but without any frame. Hahn brings back certain frames – even following ABA song format – but with a highly impressionistic eight-note ostinato that veers between major and minor in response to the opening line's description of half lights.

Not everything is wonderful. The 'Un grand sommeil noir' setting by Varèse shows the composer as a flicker of his future self (it's a student work). Nathalie Stutzmann's cameo appearance in Massenet's duet version of 'La lune blanche' brings welcome variety but her voice hardly matches with Jaroussky's and the music itself is hardly Massenet's best.

Though Charles Trenet's version of 'Chanson d'automne' is wilfully gauche (even changing Verlaine's words), each CD ends with more successful pop-song versions of Verlaine, the best being Brassens's 'Colombine'.

Throughout, Jaroussky's singing is immaculate, the singer and the song heard in a seamless bond, always beautifully supported by Jérôme Ducros with occasional string quartet arrangements of songs that tend to turn up the heat in the visual imagery, occasionally inspiring the Ebène Quartet towards jazzy Stéphane Grappelli-style fantasy. Some arrangements are credited to Jaroussky himself. Is that a good indication of how close this project is to his heart? **David Patrick Stearns**

## 'In the Midst of Life'

'Music from the Baldwin Partbooks, Vol 1'

**Byrd** Audi vi vocem de caelo. Circumdederunt dolores mortis **Gerarde** Sive vigilem **Mundy** Sive vigilem **Parsons** Credo quod redemptor meus vivit. Libera me Domine. Peccantem me quotidie **Sheppard** Media vita **Tallis** Nunc dimittis **Taverner** Quemadmodum **Contrapunctus** / **Owen Rees**

Signum © SIGCD408 (68' • DDD • T/t)



Early music needs another British vocal ensemble like a meerkat needs car

insurance. It's a field that's already standing-room only, with long-established groups jostling with younger rivals for space. But Contrapunctus are special. Their first disc, 'Libera nos: The Cry of the Oppressed' (Signum, 11/13), was seriously, startlingly good: the intimacy of The Cardinall's Musick, the rich, glowing tone of The Sixteen and the textual drama of Stile Antico. Their second disc proves that this was no one-off.

It's a shame that both the group's name and the rather earnest cover of 'In the Midst of Life' (subtitled 'Music from the Baldwin Partbooks, Vol 1') may dissuade casual listeners from exploring the contents, because they would find much to delight here. This first selection from the rich Baldwin repertoire (Latin-texted English church music) broods on mortality, death and judgement. Works by Byrd, Tallis, Parsons and Sheppard feature alongside the odd wildcard – Dericke Gerarde's *Sive vigilem* is a quietly extraordinary discovery.

Contrapunctus play a long game with this often slow-paced, meditative repertoire. These are understated

performances whose moment-to-moment drama is less striking than the long, aching arcs they achieve over five or six minutes – director Owen Rees shows his experience here, making a case for a conductor in a climate in which musical democracy is increasingly king.

Choral blend is mossy-soft and balance immaculate, perfect for the yearning loveliness of Taverner's *Quemadmodum* or Sheppard's *Media vita*. After two discs of penitence, however, I'd love to hear something a bit more rhythmic, more energetic in their next release. If Contrapunctus can do vivid attack as well as they do misty piety, they may find themselves setting the bar in this repertoire. **Alexandra Coghlan**

## 'One Equal Music'

**Bairstow** Let all mortal flesh keep silence **Beamish** In the stillness **W Harris** Bring us, O Lord God. Faire is the heaven. Holy is the true light **F Jackson** Evening Hymn **Lauridsen** O magnum mysterium **MacMillan** O radiant dawn **P Moore** Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer **Parry** My soul, there is a country **Pärt** Magnificat **Rachmaninov** All-Night Vigil – Bogoroditse Dyevo **Whitacre** Alleluia **St Peter's Singers** / **Simon Lindley** St Peter's Singers © SPS001 (70' • DDD)

Available from [stpeters-singers.org.uk](http://stpeters-singers.org.uk)



This impressively wide collection of pieces comes from the formidable Leeds-

based choir, the St Peter's Singers, recording in Frank Matcham's Leeds structure known as the Victoria Quarter. That venue is specially important when it contributes so positively to the atmospheric beauty of the sound. The photo in the booklet explains everything.

A key to the collection is the contribution of the long-lived Victorian composer William Harris (1883-1973). He is represented by three works, not just the opening and closing items but also by *Faire is the heaven* for double choir. It is from the text of this last that the title of the disc comes, taken from a poem by John Donne: 'No noise, nor silence; but one equal music', sung with appropriate directness. Other composers from the same generation represented are Edward Bairstow, and Hubert Parry in one of his finest motets, *My soul there is a country*.

The music of the Orthodox church weaves its way through not only Arvo Pärt's *Magnificat*, an item from Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*, and, to an

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extent, the impressive motet by James MacMillan, *O radiant dawn*. Another theme is the contribution of successive York Minster organists, with Bairstow followed by Francis Jackson and Philip Moore, who contributes three of the most powerful items, settings of prayers by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Equally direct in a gentler way is the delightful item by Sally Beamish, *In the stillness*. Fine performances and good blend – an impressive showcase for Simon Lindley's brilliant choir. **Edward Greenfield**

## 'Orfeo[ls]'

'Italian and French Cantatas'

**Clérambault** Orphée **Pergolesi** Orfeo

**Rameau** Orphée **A Scarlatti** L'Orfeo

**Sunhae Im** sop **Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin**

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2189 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Sunhae Im, the Korean soprano familiar from her contributions to René

Jacobs's recordings of Mozart operas, here turns to concert pieces from earlier in the 18th century, all on the subject of Orpheus and the loss of Eurydice. Scarlatti and Pergolesi were active in Naples. Pergolesi's *Orfeo* consists of two *da capo* arias, preceded respectively by an accompanied and a *secco* recitative. 'Euridice, e dove sei?', with its flowing introduction from the strings, is a cheerful number in the *galant* style: Sunhae Im avoids triviality by investing her phrases with an appropriate urgency. 'O d'Euridice' makes its effect with a fast opening followed by a dramatic pause and a slower tempo.

The other three cantatas make use of a narrator to complement Orpheus's direct speech. In Clérambault's *Orphée*, the 'faithful echoes of the woods' are represented by the soft flute of Christoph Huntgeburth. When Orpheus refers to himself as 'the son of the God of Day', the accompaniment is light, the bass instruments silent. This air, the third of four, ends with a moving, twofold reprise of the phrase where he begs Pluto to restore Eurydice to him. Scarlatti's *L'Orfeo* is significantly different in style from the Pergolesi piece: there's a fierce, dotted introduction from the instruments, and the first aria includes suspensions and, not unexpectedly, Neapolitan sixth cadences. Sunhae Im sings 'Sordo il tronco', the central aria, in a beautiful *mezza voce*. Rameau's *Orphée* brings back the flute, and also Bernhard Forck's violin. The playing, mostly one-to-a-part, is exquisite; so is the singing. **Richard Lawrence**

## 'Praga Magna'

'The Music in Prague during the Reign of Rudolf II'

**Lassus** Confitebor tibi Domine **Monte** Missa super Confitebor tibi Domine. Langue al vostro languir. Già fu chi m'hebbe cara **Orologio** Intrada V **Palestrina/Bassano** Veni dilecta mi **Regnart** Litaniae deiparae Mariae virginis **Zanchi** Canzona II a 4

**Cappella Mariana / Vojtěch Semerád**

Supraphon © AV0001-2 (60' • DDD)



The reign of Rudolf II (1576-1611) marked the zenith of Prague as an imperial capital.

But whereas Rudolf's patronage of the fine arts (and occultists of all stripes, for that matter) is the stuff of legend, his interest in music seems to have been limited. From his father and predecessor he inherited his chapel-master Philippe de Monte, and of all the contemporary musicians of comparable standing, Monte is arguably the least striking. Put another way, there were others active in Prague (Jacobus Gallus springs to mind) whose output might seem to us more in tune with the eccentric, eclectic atmosphere of Rudolph's court. So the decision to illustrate its music on this recording with almost exclusive reference to Monte, while logical, somehow feels like a missed opportunity.

Perhaps it's Monte's apparent reluctance to engage with the structural potential of musical rhetoric that makes his music difficult to grasp nowadays. It's unimpeachably well made, and its own reluctance to draw attention to itself might be considered a positive attribute. When performed as sympathetically as here, it is very enjoyable to listen to (the two Italian madrigals included here particularly so). Cappella Mariana use solo voices and instruments (cornetts, sackbuts, organ and theorbo). The overall sound is well blended, the individual timbres are most attractive and the sense of dedication and commitment is obvious. Does the music need grabbing yet more forcibly by the scruff of the neck? I still wonder; but don't hesitate to puzzle the thing out for yourself. **Fabrice Fitch**

## 'This Other Eden'

'A Landscape of English Poetry and Song'

**Barber** Dover Beach **Britten** Early Morning **Bathe Gurney** The fields are full. The Salley Gardens **Head** The Estuary. A Green Cornfield **Horovitz** Lady Macbeth: A Scena **Howells** King David **Ireland** Earth's Call. Spring Will Not Wait

**MacMillan** The Children **Quilter** I will go with my father a-ploughing. I wish and I wish **Stanford** La belle dame sans merci **Traditional** Ma bonny lad **Vaughan Williams** Silent Noon. We'll to the woods no more **Warlock** My Own Country **Kitty Whately** mez **Joseph Middleton** pf **Kevin Whately, Madelaine Newton** readers **Navarra Quartet** Champs Hill © CHRCD094 (82' • DDD)



Since winning the Kathleen Ferrier Award in 2011, mezzo-soprano Kitty

Whately has been gradually building her reputation in both concert hall and opera house, aided by a place on the BBC's New Generation Artists scheme. Now she makes her solo recording debut with this lovingly crafted disc of English song.

From the artwork to the repertoire and fellow performers, 'This Other Eden' is a very personal project – exactly the kind of quirky, quality product we've come to expect from young label Champs Hill. Whately is joined not only by pianist Joseph Middleton and the Navarra Quartet but also by her parents – actors Kevin Whately (best known as Lewis in *Morse*) and Madelaine Newton – who intersperse songs with poetry by Hardy, Housman, de la Mare et al. Whately's daughter Ivy features prominently in the artwork, while the choice of songs reflects the mezzo's relationship with the British countryside.

Whately is a captivating live performer, and, denied any of her usual armoury of expressive gestures, seems to compensate here with greater vocal drama. This works well for those songs with greater natural scope – Stanford's epic-in-miniature 'La belle dame sans merci', Joseph Horovitz's 'Lady Macbeth: A Scena', James MacMillan's 'The Children' – but pushes others towards the frenetic. She can't quite find the stillness in 'Silent Noon' or Warlock's 'My Own Country' that is their most English quality, that fragile emotional repose.

Nevertheless, Whately's light, flexible mezzo makes an attractive companion for an hour's listening, especially paired with the varied textures offered by Middleton and the Navarra Quartet. This is an unusual, even old-fashioned disc, but perhaps better for that. In an age of glossily interchangeable international artists, this one isn't afraid to tell us her story. I, for one, want to hear more.

**Alexandra Coghlan**

# REISSUES

**Rob Cowan** on the third volume in Universal's remastered reissues from the Mercury Living Presence archives

## *Mercury rising*



Paul Paray, the conductor who made the Detroit Symphony one of the finest 'French' orchestras on the planet

That Mercury recordings make for dramatic listening is fact pure and simple. But is the drama musical or audio-based? This third Living Presence collection offers a brief but telling comparison in two versions of the Coronation March from Meyerbeer's opera *Le prophète*. The performance on Charles Mackerras's breezy 'Kaleidoscope' CD with the LSO (a Mercury production for Philips) is brisk, crisp and to-the-point, the sort of thing that you might expect to hear in the opera house. But turn to Paul Paray with the Detroit Symphony on his 'Marches and Overtures à la Française' disc and you're in a different world entirely: Paray's performance, proud, imperious, majestic...and played at roughly half Mackerras's tempo. So it's clearly not just a question of Living Presence, though sound is important.

Prior to plunging into this handsome, sturdily produced 53-CD Collector's Edition I took myself off to Abbey Road Studios, where transfer guru Andrew Walter was ready and waiting with some choice samplings of his latest work. 'The

first recording I heard for this present project was Respighi's *Church Windows*,' he told me gleefully. 'The huge tam-tam stroke that comes at the end of "St Michael the Archangel" [CD40, at the close of tr 6]. It knocked me out of my chair!' We listen and the effect is like the J Arthur Rank gong amplified tenfold. The effect of Copland's Third Symphony, also with the Minneapolis Symphony under Antal Dorati, another fabulous performance, is similarly imposing, especially the *Fanfare for the Common Man* finale, and so is the mono *1812 Overture*, though I found Dorati's Minneapolis account of Britten's *Purcell Variations* rather stolid. Both, again, are in spectacular mono. But why have the mono CDs not been granted fill-ups, as was the case on Decca's superb 'Decca Sound: the Mono Years' collection (discussed by Mike Ashman in March and my reissue of the year so far)?

Walter reminisces further. 'When the project started, boxes of tapes turned up and we suspected that we might get a single CD out of them; we'd pick and choose from the bits that had survived. We went

through the collection tape by tape and were astonished when we got something off one of them.' The process of restoration started with a process that more resembled a scene from TV's *Masterchef* than a day in an audio transfer studio. 'The very first process of remastering is not playing a tape or listening to music, it's actually putting it in an oven for about six or seven days, baking the tape because the oxide on the tape has shed. That's what happens with certain types of early tape stock: if I played the music, it would disappear – nothing would be left afterwards. So we put it in an oven at a temperature of about 80-90 degrees – you're laughing but this is serious...' (Sorry, but I couldn't help it!) '...for about six days and it seals the oxide to the back of the tape which means you could play it again. It also minimises drop-outs and lots of other problems.'

Andrew Walter talks enthusiastically about the Mercury recording philosophy. 'Mercury is all about the placement of the microphones. When it was first described to me – here I'm talking in particular about the mono recordings – I was told about the one Neumann microphone set roughly 50 feet back from the orchestra, above the conductor. And I thought to myself, well that's not going to work. And yet it sounds astonishing. The word "presence" is right on the button. It has an amazing depth to the sound – space, width, depth... everything. So, that's the technique they used...which is not the technique used by Decca, EMI and others. There's that extraordinary Mercury sonority that is unique to the label.'

Walter has been working in collaboration with mastering engineer Andrew Nicholas and Tom Fine, son of Wilma Cozart and C Robert Fine, whose brainchild the Mercury venture was. 'Imagine the scene. I'm sitting here in Abbey Road Studios with Tom on the other end of the email in New York. So what we actually did when we finally managed to get the tapes transferred – and I've giggled with Tom about this ever since – I would say "This is the tape flat, what do you think?" And he would say "I think we need to do this or that," or "I think my mother would have wanted this cut here." We found that with a lot of it – the Respighi, for example – the original LP had too much edge to the strings. Tom agreed. He wanted me to do something with that edge, just a little bit of EQ [equalisation].' Although Walter takes a fairly purist view of the project – his method is fairly non-interventionist – he's keen to point out that 'you have to remember that when the vinyl disc was originally cut it was heard in a certain way.'





Antal Dorati was a mainstay of the Mercury Living Presence catalogue, a master of drawing superb music-making from orchestras in the recording studio

Adjustments had to be made to fit the sound on to the groove, so they often put cuts into the treble or bass ends. We then transfer the tape flat and hear other things that were never apparent on vinyl. When we're transferring something, people occasionally say, "Why have you changed the sound there, adjusted this or that?" And we invariably say "We haven't – that's what the mastertape sounds like". They adjusted it when they prepared the LP, for whatever reason. So it's a balance. What Tom and I have heard on the LP, what we've liked or haven't liked, and what's actually on the tape – it's a case of deciding between the two. What you can't do is just transfer the tape flat, because it's like an unpolished, unfinished item.'

So far as the music is concerned, there are very good things included here, and a curious duplication from the first Living Presence set, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* with Paray. Other Paray items, all of them high-powered and occasionally impatient, are Haydn's Symphony No 96, the Sibelius and Rachmaninov Seconds, Mendelssohn's Fifth, Dvořák's Ninth and, best of all, the Chausson Symphony. The four Schumann symphonies (plus the *Manfred* Overture) cut straight to the chase: seatbelts are mandatory for the (mono) Fourth Symphony. A gravelly-sounding Howard Hanson explains about the composer and his orchestra, a sort of expanded *Young Person's Guide*, though the tunes aren't nearly so good, and there's Gershwin's Piano Concerto, *Rhapsody in Blue* (both with Eugene List) and *Cuban Overture*, all

under Hanson's expert direction, as well as a sympathetically played Bloch programme (the *Concerti grossi* and *Schelomo*).

Dorati's stereo quota includes a Minneapolis *Sheherazade* drilled to within an inch of its life, and a lissom, Toscanini-style Minneapolis *Eroica* that I don't recall having heard in stereo before, certainly not on CD, although a mono Philips LP did grace local stores for a while. Dorati's Brahms symphonies are uncompromisingly direct, the first movements of Nos 1 and 3 (both with the LSO) especially impressive. Under Dorati's direction the first three Tchaikovsky symphonies have a decidedly balletic feel to them, whereas the Fifth is energetic and dignified. Wagner selections from both Dorati and Paray also have plenty of character and there are chipper Schubert symphonies (Nos 5, 6, 8 and 9) conducted by Stanisław Skrowaczewski and Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt (No 6). Although a Philips-Mercury pact (explained in the booklet) keeps certain famous recordings in both camps, it was a shame that, given that so many Mercury originals still await 'official' CD transfer, valuable disc space was devoted to, for example, Sviatoslav Richter's Liszt piano concertos under Kyrill Kondrashin and the Beethoven cello sonatas with Richter and Rostropovich when both are readily available elsewhere, most recently in Decca's 'Sviatoslav Richter: The Complete Decca, Philips and Decca recordings', which I wrote about in the April 'Replay'.

Dorati's Tchaikovsky orchestral suites sound much as they do on Philips though

Rafael Puyana's Soler recital (including the *Fandango*) emerges as rather more cleanly focused than it did when Philips issued it on CD some while ago. Anatole Fistoulari's compete LSO *Giselle* is a joy; there's some excellent Frederick Fennell material (both light and serious fare), Neville Marriner with The London Strings (and recorder player Bernard Krainis) and, most unexpectedly, Shostakovich's Fourth and Eighth String Quartets played by the Borodin Quartet and recorded on location in Moscow in June 1962, superb performances, both of them. And if you want to sample flamenco at its most thrilling, try track 5 of the Los Romeros' CD 'World of Flamenco'. A fine collection (selling for about £100 if you shop around), and no mistake, but there's more where this came from – much more. So let's be having it!

## THE RECORDING

### Mercury Living Presence, Vol 3

Various artists

Mercury Living Presence/Decca © (53 discs)  
478 7896DB53



# Opera



## Hugo Shirley welcomes a new recording of Strauss's *Feuersnot*:

*'After its recent Intermezzo, CPO has once more put Straussians and opera lovers in its debt'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 91**



## David Patrick Stearns on Bryan Hymel's debut recital, 'Héroïque':

*'Hymel has keen instincts for building long-term climaxes in this music and making them ring out spectacularly'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

## Cavaliere

### Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo

**Marie-Claude Chappuis** *mez*..... **Anima**  
**Johannes Weisser** *bar*..... **Corpo**  
**Gyula Orendt** *bar*..... **Tempo/Consiglio**  
**Mark Milhofer** *ten*..... **Intelletto/Piacere**  
**Marcos Fink** *bass-bar*..... **Mondo/Compagno di Piacere**  
**Berlin State Opera Chorus; Concerto Vocale;**  
**Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / René Jacobs**  
 Harmonia Mundi (M) (2) HMC90 2200/01  
 (93' • DDD • T/t)



The booklet-note for this release asks a total of three times the question 'is

Cavaliere's *Rappresentazione di anima e di corpo* an opera or an oratorio?' Certainly it can be interpreted either way. First performed in Rome in 1600, its elevating subject – allegorical figures debating the benefits of the kind of disciplined living that will guarantee heavenly afterlife (championed by Anima, the Soul) over submission to brief earthly pleasures and eternal hell (longed for by Corpo, the Body) – puts it squarely at the head of the oratorio tradition. Yet at the same time it is the work of a composer who had toiled in the very workshop of the musico-dramatic avant-garde in Florence, and who here was among the very first to render dialogue in the radical solo *recitar cantando* of early opera. If René Jacobs has any doubts over the answer, he does not allow it to stay his hand; his reading, derived from a staging at Berlin's Staatsoper im Schiller-Theater, absolutely reeks of the stage.

*Rappresentazione* is not, it should be said, an opera with the declamatory flexibility, narrative grip or dramatic depth of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* of seven years later – it is far more static and undifferentiated than that – but it does have a similar flavour with its solos, choruses and ritornellos, many of them in decidedly dance-like measure. Jacobs strengthens the resemblance by employing the same kind of luxury scoring (the original publication's

recommendations were relaxed on the subject), and the colourings of violins, viols, strings, recorders, cornetts, trombones and percussion added to the expected continuo battery are used to give shape and help delineate character. Another of Cavaliere's suggestions – separating the forces into three groups, each in its own aural space – is also strikingly observed.

As often with Jacobs, it is hard to know how much he has added to the original (though there are definitely some instrumental interventions by Schein), but perhaps that is beside the point. This is a conductor whose deep knowledge of his subject combines with strong dramatic instinct to make a vital theatre piece. Others are free to do it differently, as for example Christina Pluhar and L'Arpeggiata do in their 2004 Alpha recording, a version which for all its predictable beauty sounds subdued next to this production with its firmly characterised singing and lusty playing. *Rappresentazione* may not be a masterpiece of opera but surely no performance has ever worked harder on its behalf than this one. **Lindsay Kemp**

*Selected comparison:*

*Arpeggiata, Pluhar (ALPH) ALPHA065*

## Mozart

### Don Giovanni

**Ruggero Raimondi** *bass-bar*..... **Don Giovanni**  
**Margaret Price** *sop*..... **Donna Anna**  
**Julia Varady** *sop*..... **Donna Elvira**  
**Lucia Popp** *sop*..... **Zerlina**  
**Hermann Winkler** *ten*..... **Don Ottavio**  
**Stafford Dean** *bass*..... **Leporello**  
**Enrico Fissore** *bass*..... **Masetto**  
**Kurt Moll** *bass*..... **Commendatore**  
**Chorus of Bavarian State Opera; Bavarian State**  
**Orchestra / Wolfgang Sawallisch**  
 Orfeo (M) (3) C846 153D (160' • ADD)  
 Recorded live, July 12, 1973



This was the first new staging of *Don Giovanni* at the rebuilt Nationaltheater in

Munich. The producer, Günther Rennert, decided on Mozart's original version for Prague in 1787, with the addition of Elvira's recitative and aria composed for Vienna; no 'Dalla sua pace', therefore. The mouth-watering cast was conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch. His *rallentandos* at the end of arias – fine by me – will be thought exaggerated by Historically Informed ears. What surely can't be gainsaid is his unerring instinct for the right basic tempo. The duet for Anna and Ottavio after the Commendatore's murder gains immeasurably from a steady speed; while the Champagne aria is fast and light, but not a scramble. Other examples include the entry of the masked characters, fast and urgent, and the deliberate tread of the statue's arrival for dinner. Sawallisch's account of Anna's hysterical recitative before 'Or sai, chi l'onore' is an object lesson in dramatic pacing.

Giovanni is a difficult character to put across: almost always in company, seen through the eyes of others, with no revelatory arias. Ruggero Raimondi is lively and witty, powerfully defiant at the end, but with little sense of the character's dark side. For my money, the male star (along with Kurt Moll's sonorous Commendatore) is Stafford Dean, right up there with Geraint Evans as a perfect Leporello. He delivers the Catalogue aria with wicked humour, and brilliantly disguises his voice for a very funny imitation of Raimondi in the recitative after 'Ah taci, ingiusto core'.

Julia Varady is slightly disappointing as Elvira: imprecise runs in 'Ah fuggi il traditor', shaky rhythm at the start of the quartet. 'Mi tradi' goes well but her consonants disappear. Margaret Price as Anna is formidably secure, with lovely, smoky tone in 'Non mi dir'. Both she and Dean could teach their colleagues a thing or two about appoggiaturas. Hermann Winkler's ungainly 'Il mio tesoro' suggests 'Dalla sua pace' is no great loss; Lucia Popp and Enrico Fissore respectively are adorable and appropriately sullen. Recent issues on Orfeo d'Or are proving to be golden indeed. **Richard Lawrence**



## Mozart

### Die Zauberflöte

Paul Groves *ten* ..... Tamino  
 Genia Kühmeier *sop* ..... Pamina  
 Diana Damrau *sop* ..... Queen of the Night  
 Christian Gerhaher *bar* ..... Papageno  
 Irena Bespalovaite *sop* ..... Papagena  
 René Pape *bass* ..... Sarastro  
 Vienna State Opera Chorus; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Riccardo Muti  
 Stage director **Pierre Audi**  
 Video director **Brian Large**  
 Decca (R) 074 3827DH (176' • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)  
 Recorded live at the Salzburg Festival, 2006  
 From DVD 074 3159DH

## Mozart

### Die Zauberflöte

Maximilian Schmitt *ten* ..... Tamino  
 Christina Landshamer *sop* ..... Pamina  
 Írde Martínez *sop* ..... Queen of the Night  
 Thomas Oliemans *bar* ..... Papageno  
 Nina Lejderman *sop* ..... Papagena  
 Brindley Sherratt *bass* ..... Sarastro  
 Chorus of Dutch National Opera; Netherlands Chamber Orchestra / Marc Albrecht  
 Stage director **Simon McBurney**  
 Video director **Misjel Vermeiren**  
 Opus Arte (R) DVD OA1122D; (R) OABD7133D  
 (163' + 20' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s). Extra features: Cast Gallery; Behind-the-scenes documentary  
 Recorded live, February 2014



Grand picture-book opera or inventive

fringe theatre? *The Magic Flute*'s popularity has seen it inflated for stage spaces too big to communicate its intimate mixture of musical and moral. One such space is Salzburg's Grosses Festspielhaus, where Riccardo Muti conducted this surprisingly conservative co-production from Amsterdam by Pierre Audi.

The eye may be seduced in Blu-ray – especially if you like mock primitive art – by the screaming Gauguin reds, yellows and greens of Karel Appel's sets (he does a fine line in huge Easter Island statues too) and Jorge Jara's costumes (those of Damrau's Queen of the Night virtually require 3D glasses to take in). Some attempt is made, in this cartoon visual world, to follow the detail – often wrongly assumed naturalistic – of the libretto's mountains and underground passages. Gerhaher's beautifully enunciated Papageno and Kühmeier's text-conscious Pamina have vocal class but they are given

little to do as actors. Muti shapes good playing with po-faced grandeur; the 'Masonic' chords just sound threatening, the Papageno accompaniments more suited to a serious Lied.

A corrective to this colourful nothingness is provided by Complicité's Simon McBurney in a more recent Amsterdam production. This is a people's *Magic Flute* which restores the tale's naive power. It is sparkily conducted in light, historically aware tempi by Marc Albrecht, and acted and sung as a tightly worked ensemble piece. Any artificial glitter in the staging (visual or dramatic) has been left to one side in favour of personal relationships – ideal for this opera.

Magic is still there but shown openly – be it Papageno's birds (actors manipulating score pages), or his bells and Tamino's flute (pit musicians are invited to play these). Subtle touches ease what we now find chauvinist and racist in the original. Monostatos – Wolfgang Ablinger-Sperrhacke makes a more serious attempt at the role than Salzburg's Blackpool-style Widow Twankey – has his 'soul' rather than his 'skin' called 'black'. Some minor reordering of the Act 2 council meeting helps suggest that Sarastro (a refreshingly non-authoritarian Brindley Sherratt) is controversially introducing women into his order, an impression strengthened by the convincing re-situating there of the trio 'Soll ich dich, Teurer, nicht mehr seh'n?'. As befits a ruler already deposed of her power, the Queen of the Night and her Ladies are shabby and poor, devoid of glam – she in a wheelchair, they in dirty petticoats. Ingenious. Recommended.

Mike Ashman

## H Purcell

### The Fairy Queen

Yvonne Kenny *sop* ..... Titania  
 Thomas Randle *ten* ..... Oberon  
 Simon Rice *ten* ..... Puck  
 Richard Van Allan *bass* ..... Theseus/Hymen  
 Michael Chance *countertenor* ..... Mortal  
 Chorus and Orchestra of English National Opera / Nicholas Kok  
 Stage director **David Pountney**  
 Video director **Barrie Gavin**  
 ArtHaus Musik (R) DVD 100 201; (R) 108 128  
 (134' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • PCM stereo • 0 • s)  
 Recorded live 1995  
 From DVD 100 200 (10/01)



How best to tackle Purcell's so-called semi-operas? *The Fairy Queen* is an adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream*, the magnificent music ancillary to the spoken play. Glyndebourne did it straight(ish) in 2009, but that of course necessitated a company of actors as well as singers. David Pountney's more economical solution in 1995 was to ditch the dialogue and turn Titania, Oberon and Theseus into singing roles. Choreographed by Quinny Sacks, with beautifully imagined sets and costumes by Robert Israel and Dunya Rankova, it makes for a highly entertaining show.

Pountney divides the music into nine Masques, starting with 'The Fairy Quarrel' and ending in 'Marriage and Reconciliation'. What particularly impresses is the sheer energy of the staging. In the second masque, 'The Town', Theseus chairs a meeting (in dumb show) while lovers divert themselves under the table to 'Come, let us leave the town'. This is followed by a *tour de force* from Jonathan Best: as the Drunken Poet he goes everywhere, from stage to auditorium to pit. In the fourth masque, Pountney gives the songs for Night and Mystery to Titania, the Indian Boy – the cause of her quarrel with Oberon – lying on a bed. Purcell's ravishing music for Sleep is taken by the Poet, drunken no longer. Another set piece, the Masque of the Four Seasons, forms part of a divertissement, 'The Birthday of a Curmudgeon': not Oberon, as in the original, but Theseus, played by a grumpy Richard Van Allan. Summer is Michael Chance in boater and blazer; Winter is the birthday boy, who emerges as Hymen at the end. There's more exuberance in the scene for Coridon and Mopsa; Pountney rather misses the joke by not having Mopsa in drag.

Tom Randle and Yvonne Kenny are excellent as Oberon and Titania, Kenny particularly fine in the usually tedious 'Plaint'. The dancing is imaginative and amusing, and the ENO forces under Nicholas Kok could have been performing Purcell all their lives. Highly entertaining, as I said, but for something nearer to the real thing you need Jonathan Kent's Glyndebourne production, bonking bunnies and all. **Richard Lawrence**

Selected comparison:

Glyndebourne Op, OAE, Christie (10/10) (OPAR)

DVD OA1031D; OABD7065D

## H Purcell • D Purcell

D Purcell The Masque of Hymen

H Purcell The Indian Queen

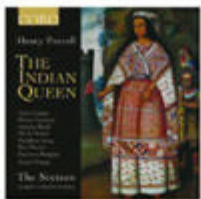
Julie Cooper, Kirsty Hopkins *sops*

Jeremy Budd, Mark Dobell, Matthew Long *tens*

Ben Davies, Eamonn Dougan, Stuart Young *basses*

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro (R) COR16129 (72' • DDD • S/T/t)



The original play *The Indian Queen* (1664) was written by Dryden and his brother-in-law

Sir Robert Howard; but in 1695 more than half of the old play was removed for Purcell's biggest theatrical venture since *The Fairy Queen*. It was an ill-fated project, not least because Purcell died unexpectedly on November 21 (the eve of St Cecilia's Day). The date of the first performance is unknown and no playbook was printed.

Andrew Pinnock's expert synopsis and essay help listeners to make sense of the broad context of Purcell's imaginative music, which includes the famous song 'I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain', sung without a trace of habit by Julie Cooper; its unusually relaxed pulse connects nicely with the following Rondeau. A fine scene for the magician Ismeron, praised by the historian Burney as 'the best piece of recitative in our language', is suavely done by Eamonn Dougan. The band play adroitly in a few curtain tunes and the Overture; trumpet tunes bookending the prologue are played with an attractive swagger by Robert Farley. High tenor Matthew Long dispatches Fame's 'Begone, curst fiends of Hell' impressively. Kirsty Hopkins's lovely performance of the Peruvian girl Orazia's love song to the Mexican warrior Moctezuma ('They tell us that your mighty powers above') reminds us that it ranks among Purcell's most rapturous operatic creations. There is not much for the collective chorus to do but they excel in the poignant solemn sacrificial scene in Act 5.

The convivial performance of younger brother Daniel Purcell's *The Masque of Hymen* (probably added to the 1696 revival) requires no justification. I continue to be puzzled by Harry Christophers's penchant for anachronistic harp continuo in repertoire where it doesn't belong; but otherwise this is an engaging advocacy of Purcell's final and seemingly incomplete opera. **David Vickers**

## Salieri

### The Chimney Sweep

**Stuart Haycock** *ten* ..... **Volpino**  
**Alexandra Oomens** *sop* ..... **Lisel**  
**Amelia Farrugia** *sop* ..... **Mrs Hawk**  
**Janet Todd** *sop* ..... **Miss Hawk**  
**Christopher Saunders** *ten* ..... **Mr Wolf**  
**David Woloszko** *bass* ..... **Mr Bear**  
**David Hidden** *bar* ..... **Tomaso**  
**Pinchgut Opera; Sydney Children's Choir;**  
**Orchestra of the Antipodes / Erin Helyard**

Pinchgut Live (F) (2) PGO05 (91' • DDD)

Recorded live at the City Recital Hall, Sydney, July 2014



Premiered at Joseph II's new German National Theatre in April

1781, Salieri's *The Chimney Sweep* (*Der Rauchfangkehrer*) is an agreeably frothy compound of slapstick and soft-edged satire. True to the Singspiel genre, the servants – chimney sweep Volpino and his lover, Lisel the cook – run rings round their improbably gullible social superiors. Disguised as an Italian nobleman-cum-singing teacher, Volpino ('little wolf') makes both Mrs Hawk and her stepdaughter fall hopelessly in love with him, then succeeds in 'selling' the ladies back to their lovers, Bear and Wolf, to enable him to marry Lisel. The silly plot prompts apt, tuneful, if not always distinctive music: slight *buffo* ditties for Volpino and Lisel, a comic catalogue aria for Bear, parodies of the heroic *seria* style for the ladies and brief, skilfully wrought ensembles. To 21st-century ears there are inevitable superficial resemblances to Mozart, occasionally to Gluck, though it comes as no surprise that the triumph of *Die Entführung* a year later effectively swept *The Chimney Sweep* from the Viennese stage.

Pinchgut Opera's English-language production evidently went down well with Sydney audiences, though it's a pity that virtually all spoken dialogue has been excised in this recording, at the expense of dramatic continuity. While there are no star voices on show, the mainly youthful singers form a lively ensemble. As the servant pair, Alexandra Oomens and Stuart Haycock make up in quick-wittedness and comic resource what they lack in vocal finish. Despite moments of shrillness, Amelia Farrugia and, especially, Janet Todd negotiate their high-wire bravura arias with panache, while bass-baritone David Woloszko nicely catches the pompous bluster of Bear, a role written for Mozart's first Osmín, Ludwig Fischer. Erin Helyard gets spirited playing from the period band, with nicely turned flute and oboe solos in Volpino's 'birdsong' aria. If a touch more vocal glamour would have 'sold' Salieri's pleasant, slender music even more persuasively, these discs offer 90 minutes of undemanding enjoyment to anyone who likes to explore the 18th-century operatic hinterland.

**Richard Wigmore**

## Steffani

**Niobe, regina di Tebe**

**Véronique Gens** *sop* ..... **Niobe**  
**Jacek Laszczkowski** *countertenor* ..... **Anfione**  
**Amanda Forsythe** *sop* ..... **Manto**  
**Bruno Taddia** *bar* ..... **Tiresia**  
**Tim Mead** *countertenor* ..... **Clearte**  
**Iestyn Davies** *countertenor* ..... **Creonte**  
**Alastair Miles** *bass* ..... **Poliferno**  
**Lothar Odinius** *ten* ..... **Tiberino**  
**Delphine Galou** *contr* ..... **Nereia**  
**Balthasar Neumann Ensemble /**  
**Thomas Hengelbrock**

Opus Arte (F) (3) OACD9008D (197' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, London, September 27 & 29, 2010



We have only just welcomed the Boston Early Music Festival's groundbreaking

account of Steffani's *Niobe* (Munich, 1688), and now another version has arrived thanks to Opus Arte and BBC Radio 3, who recorded this Royal Opera production across two nights in September 2010. The structured cacophony of splendid trumpets and drums in the Sinfonia illustrates how the Balthasar Neumann Ensemble are no slouches in comparison to any of the world's finest Baroque orchestras, and it is significant, given Thomas Hengelbrock's vigorously theatrical approach to the score, to note that he had already conducted it in a 2008 co-production between Schwetzingen (a historic castle theatre near Heidelberg) and Lisbon's National Theatre of São Carlos.

The production is about 56 minutes shorter than Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs's meticulously crafted performance, which indicates the high level of cuts in Hengelbrock's version. The experienced tragedienne Véronique Gens conveys pathos potently in Niobe's shocked reactions to her husband's suicide and her transformation into stone. The BBC's microphones do not catch the sweetness of Amanda Forsythe's stylish Manto as effectively as Erato's studio recording does. O'Dette and Stubbs's casting of high tenor Aaron Sheehan as the hopelessly infatuated Clearte makes better musical sense than Hengelbrock's casting of countertenor Tim Mead, who sings with passion and refinement but sometimes unevenly. Alastair Miles's Poliferno is thunderously villainous, and his protégé Creonte is sung with brilliant characterisation and rock-solid technique by Iestyn Davies (the only cast member who trumps his Bostonian counterpart). Hengelbrock's awareness of





A vigorously theatrical approach to Steffani: Opus Arte's recording of the Royal Opera's 2010 production of *Niobe*, regina di Tebe

colour and emotion in Steffani's music is second to none, and admirers of Steffani's fine opera will find much to enjoy, but this production is fundamentally undermined by 'sopranist' Jacek Laszczkowski, whose forcefully squeezed timbre, weak, under-phrased middle range, vibrato-sozzled unreliability and exaggerations of extremely high notes all conspire to butcher the main role of the Theban king Anfione; Steffani's magical evocation of the harmony of the spheres in 'Sfere amiche' is played sensationally by muted strings (instead of viols), but it is rendered impotent by Laszczkowski's singing. It's a shame, given the supremely good work done elsewhere by Hengelbrock, his talented orchestra and the rest of the cast. **David Vickers**

*Comparative version:*

*O'Dette, Stubbs (3/15) (ERAT) 2564 63435-4*

## R Strauss

### *Ariadne auf Naxos*

<b>Camilla Nylund</b> <i>sop</i> .....	<b>Ariadne</b>
<b>Claudia Mahnke</b> <i>mez</i> .....	<b>Composer</b>
<b>Brenda Rae</b> <i>sop</i> .....	<b>Zerbinetta</b>
<b>Michael König</b> <i>ten</i> .....	<b>Bacchus</b>
<b>Franz Grundheber</b> <i>bar</i> .....	<b>Music-Master</b>
<b>Daniel Schmutzhard</b> <i>bar</i> .....	<b>Harlequin</b>
<b>Michael McCown</b> <i>ten</i> .....	<b>Scaramuccio</b>

<b>Alfred Reiter</b> <i>bass</i> .....	<b>Truffaldino</b>
<b>Martin Mitternuttner</b> <i>ten</i> .....	<b>Brighella</b>
<b>Elizabeth Reiter</b> <i>sop</i> .....	<b>Naiad</b>
<b>Katharina Magiera</b> <i>contr</i> .....	<b>Dryad</b>
<b>Maren Favela</b> <i>sop</i> .....	<b>Echo</b>
<b>William Relton</b> <i>spkr</i> .....	<b>Major-Domo</b>

**Farnkfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra / Sebastian Weigle**  
Oehms Ⓢ Ⓜ OC947 (124' • DDD)



Oehms Classics and Oper Frankfurt continue to buck the prevailing record-company trend in releasing primarily CD recordings of its performances. The appearance of its *Ring* on DVD offered an exception; the pictures throughout the booklet of this new *Ariadne auf Naxos* made me eager to see Brigitte Fassbaender's production, during the open run of which in October 2013 this set was recorded. As a sound-only recording it also faces stiffer competition for anyone interested in it as more than just a souvenir of those performances.

Where it scores very highly is in the conducting of Sebastian Weigle, Frankfurt's Music Director since 2008.

This is a fluid and flexible account of the score, light on its feet in the comedy but also willing to explore the mysterious Hofmannsthalian depths. There's plenty of detail to be heard in Oehms's recording, with the chamber forces sounding unusually full-bodied – the playing from the Frankfurt Opern- und Museumsorchester is also excellent.

It says a great deal for the company that the cast is largely drawn from its permanent ensemble but few of the singers benefit from sound that has clearly opted for close-up focus rather than offering much air around the voices, emphasising the vibrato of the higher ones, in particular, while also strangely keeping Michael König's impressively reliable if hardly luxurious Bacchus set rather far back.

Camilla Nylund's *Ariadne* would, I suspect, be more seductive in the theatre, but she sings securely and communicates the character's transformation persuasively. Brenda Rae's *Zerbinetta*, meanwhile, offers a voice that has agility and character, and none of the brittleness of some coloratura sopranos. Claudia Mahnke is a suitably impassioned and ardent Composer, although I did on occasion wish for the intensity to let up a little. Harlequin is usually one of the easier roles to cast in this



THE NINTH

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opera but Daniel Schmutzhard's baritone is short on the charm and mellifluousness one expects, while the veteran Franz Grundheber makes a rather rough-sounding Music-Master. William Relton's Major-Domo favours slight hysteria over Viennese superciliousness, incidentally, presumably to fit in with the production.

Hugo Shirley

## R Strauss

### Feuersnot

**Simone Schneider** *sop* ..... **Diemut**  
**Markus Eiche** *bar* ..... **Kunrad**  
**Lars Woldt** *bass* ..... **Ortolf Sentlinger**  
**Rouwen Huther** *ten* ..... **Schweiker von Gundelfingen**  
**Monica Mascus** *mez* ..... **Elsbeth**  
**Sandra Janke** *contr* ..... **Wigelis**  
**Olena Tokar** *contr* ..... **Margret**  
**Wilhelm Schwinghammer** *bass* ..... **Jörg Pöschel**  
**Michael Kupfer** *bar* ..... **Hämerlein**  
**Andreas Burkhardt** *bar* ..... **Kofel**  
**Ludwig Mittelhammer** *bass* ..... **Kunz Gilgenstock**  
**Song Sung Min** *ten* ..... **Ortlieb Tulbeck**  
**Children's Chorus of the State Theatre on**  
**Gärtnerplatz; Bavarian Radio Chorus;**  
**Munich Radio Orchestra / Ulf Schirmer**  
 CPO ② CPO777 920-2 (88' • DDD • T/t)



Part of the importance of this excellent new recording of Strauss's second opera lies in

the fact that it includes a translation of the libretto – something that has not been available with the various versions that have come and gone over the years. Ernst von Wolzogen's allusive and pun-filled text, further complicated by Munich dialect and in-jokes, is traditionally seen as one of *Feuersnot*'s main drawbacks. Susan Maria Praeder's booklet translation doesn't attempt to capture its constant wordplay but offers clear English instead, which allows one to follow the broader action.

As such, the piece's barbed attacks on Munich seem less important than its position as the essential step towards *Salome*: a bold and, at the time, scandalous celebration of sensuous love, a trenchant critique of petty moralising, a final leave-taking of Wagner's idea of love as existing only in pure and redemptive form. Strauss's score does occasionally get bogged down in its cleverness but is characterised by a real modernist *Schwung*, a joyous sense of mischief and melodic richness, capturing the scurrilous plot's atmosphere of midsummer high spirits beautifully.

The performance here, recorded at the beginning of 2014, is wonderfully airy and easy-going. The main competition comes

from Heinz Fricke's set, also with the Munich Radio Orchestra (1/85, 9/99): variously (un)available and starring Julia Varady and Bernd Weikl, it is perhaps larger-scale and more impetuous, but Ulf Schirmer and his orchestra bring out the music's warmth, with textures sounding transparent in CPO's natural recording.

Markus Eiche might not be the heroic voice that Kunrad (the first of the autobiographical baritone roles Strauss would write) seems to call for – Marcel Cordes on Kempe's sprightly live Orfeo set is probably closer to that ideal – but he has the notes and sings eloquently and intelligently. Simone Schneider sounds a touch womanly as the initially virginal Diemut but performs with thrilling fearlessness and commitment.

The rest of the large cast is enthusiastic, while the children's chorus makes light work of its extended role, whose trickiness is traditionally seen as another stumbling block to the work's success. After its recent *Intermezzo* (11/14), CPO has once more put Straussians and opera lovers in its debt.

Hugo Shirley

Selected comparison:

Kempe (11/98) (ORFE) C423 962I

## Wagner

### Der fliegende Holländer

**Terje Stensvold** *bar* ..... **Holländer**  
**Anja Kampe** *sop* ..... **Senta**  
**Kwangchul Youn** *bar* ..... **Daland**  
**Christopher Ventris** *ten* ..... **Erik**  
**Jane Henschel** *mez* ..... **Mary**  
**Thomas Russell** *ten* ..... **Steersman**  
**WDR Radio Chorus, Cologne; Bavarian Radio**  
**Chorus; NDR Chorus; Royal Concertgebouw**  
**Orchestra / Andris Nelsons**  
 RCO Live ② RCO14004 (136' • DDD)  
 Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam,  
 May 24 & 26, 2013



*Der fliegende Holländer* – despite being a ghost story with spectacular outdoor scenes – is

essentially a chamber opera about the frustrations of rejection and the best performances that have come down to us are the ones that play up this theme most. Andris Nelsons certainly obliges here with the attention he pays to the Holländer's woes in Act 1 and the big Act 2 duet with Senta ('Ach! Könntest das Geschick du ahnen...'), or Erik's in his prior dream narration. The conductor and his orchestra are exciting throughout but he never attempts, *pace* disc rivals Solti, Karajan and Levine, to blow this score up into the later

grand-opera-scale music drama that it isn't. There's always time and (musical) balance for the private moments in a basically swift traversal of the score.

It helps here that Terje Stensvold is (literally) a senior Holländer, almost three score years and ten at the time of recording. In the best possible way – try any of the monologues – he sounds intentionally like he's been at sea a long time. You may want also to seek more vocal sap and more *forza* elsewhere (London and Hotter for two), but Stensvold's enunciation of the role through the text is both moving and understanding. He sounds well opposite Kwangchul Youn's now also highly experienced father Daland and Anja Kampe's remarkable Senta: remarkable because she has exactly the kind of Helden-Weber soprano (bright, sensitive, penetrating, not too heavy) that this role cries out for but so rarely gets. A fine achievement. Praise is also due to Christopher Ventris's detailed, well-understood Erik (never a crybaby) and the three guest German choruses. The opera is given in the 'final' revised (ie *Tristan* ending) version, although the music (very sensibly) comes to a full close at the end of Act 1 and Nelsons's conducting is clearly aware of earlier versions and balances. Fine recording. Hugely recommended.

Mike Ashman

## 'Fiamma del Belcanto'

**Bellini** *I puritani* – O rendeteme la speme...Qui la voce sua suave...Vien diletto. La Sonnambula – Oh! se una volta sola...Ah, non credea mirarti... Ah, non giunge uman pensiero **Donizetti** *Maria Stuarda* – Allenta il piè, Regina...O nube! che lieve per l'aria ti aggiri...Nella pace del mesto riposo<sup>a</sup>. **Rosmonda d'Inghilterra** – Ancor non giunse... Perché non ho del vento...Torna torna, o caro oggetto **Leoncavallo** *Pagliacci* – Qual fiamma **Puccini** *La bohème* – Done lieta uscì al tuo grido d'amore **Verdi** *Luisa Miller* – Il padre tuo...Tu puniscimi, o Signore...Qui nulla...A brani, a brani<sup>c</sup>. *I masnadieri* – Venerabile, o padre, è il tuo semblante...Lo sguardo avea degli angeli. *La traviata* – È strano! è strano!...Ah, fors'è lui... *Follie!* *Follie!*...Sempre libera<sup>b</sup>

**Diana Damrau** *sop* with <sup>a</sup>**Nicole Brandolino** *mez*  
<sup>b</sup>**Piotr Beczala** *ten* <sup>c</sup>**Nicolas Testé** *bass* **Orchestra of the Teatro Regio, Turin / Gianandrea Noseda**  
 Erato ② 2564 61667-4 (79' • DDD)



Sopranos in Italian repertoire suddenly seem to have been reading Philip Gossett's *Divas and Scholars* book. Here, following the work of Cecilia Bartoli,

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comes a carefully researched (and hugely ambitious) recital programme which bursts beyond its Donizetti/Bellini/early Verdi boundaries to 'claim' Mimi's Act 3 *Bobème* farewell and Nedda's *Pagliacci* bird fantasy as successors to that earlier tradition.

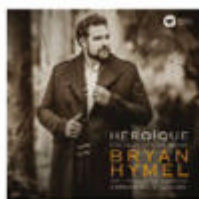
This is a hell of a sing for a soprano. Yet, as with Damrau's recent *Lucia* recording (1/15), listening rapture is modified not by lack of range – the notes *in alt* are all there – or even of technique but by a lack of distinctive vocal colour in characterisation. Under pressure high up Damrau sounds white. So the lesser-known Verdi items sound rather samey: have this Amalia and this Luisa really just been compelled to abandon their life's loves? Their emotions don't – to quote Bellini's memo to Pepoli about *Puritani* – 'draw tears, terrify people, make them die through singing'. Be gramophonically cruel and play Callas in as much of this repertoire as we are able (six of the operas, I think) and there's no doubt that you are listening to the dramas of totally different people. Here I'm not so sure.

The two later *verismo* items actually sound rather grand and careful – like a Verdi singer suddenly made to slum it in repertoire they deem less precise – not quite the 'concise and powerful human volcanic eruption' as which Damrau is translated as describing the Leoncavallo. But earlier is better. The first two items of Elvira's Act 2 *Puritani* breakdown are quite sad and moving, and Damrau seems able to evoke (and colour) Maria Stuarda's nostalgia for her French childhood more easily than Nedda's escape from the road. Turin's accompaniments under Noseda are spot-on stylish and the recording is true. Listen before you buy. **Mike Ashman**

## 'Héroïque'

**Berlioz** La damnation de Faust – Nature immense.  
**Les Troyens** – Inutiles regrets **Bruneau** L'attaque du moulin – Le jour tombe...Adieu, forêt profonde  
**Gounod** Le reine de Saba – Faiblesse de la race humaine...Inspirez-moi, race divine **Massenet** Hérodiade – Ne pouvant réprimer les élans de la foi **Meyerbeer** L'Africaine – Pays merveilleux...  
 O Paradis...Conduisez-moi vers ce navire<sup>a</sup> **Rabaud** Rolande et le mauvais garçon – Chante vieux jardin ta chanson de cigale **Reyer** Sigurd – Le bruit des chants s'étend...Esprits, gardiens de ces lieux  
**Rossini** Guillaume Tell – Ne 'abandonne point...  
 Asile héréditaire...Amis, amis secondez ma vengeance<sup>a</sup> **Verdi** Jérusalem – L'Emir auprès de lui m'appelle...Je veux encore entendre ta voix. Les vèpres siciliennes – C'est Guy de Montfort...O jour de peine et de souffrance

**Bryan Hymel** *ten* <sup>a</sup>**Czech Philharmonic Choir, Brno; Prague Philharmonia / Emmanuel Villaume**  
 Warner Classics © 2564 61795-0 (73' • DDD • T/t)



Long before he titled his first solo disc 'Héroïque', Bryan Hymel achieved hero

status by filling in for fallen comrades (including Jonas Kaufmann, no less) in the difficult-to-cast role of Aeneas in *Les Troyens*. Would the Royal Opera's production of *Robert le diable* have been possible without his upper extension, which some lyric tenors can manage but not without muscling their voices into places that even Jon Vickers wasn't comfortable in going? In this elusive voice type, Hymel has few rivals – Michael Spyres being the main one – though the two tenors don't sound much alike.

Hymel's distinctive timbre has the veneer of a baritone with a nice medium-size vibrato, though just under the surface is a tenor-esque brightness. The repertoire might suggest he's a throwback to the tenors of old, though a YouTube tour going back to Jean de Reszke shows that he sounds like none of them, thanks to the particular robustness of his upper range. Hymel also has keen instincts for building long-term climaxes in this music and making them ring out spectacularly. In the extended Act 4 scene from *William Tell* with full chorus raging behind him, he tops it off with a high C that's held with spellbinding brinkmanship for a full 10 seconds. So he also has the killer instincts of a star tenor.

Nothing else on the disc quite equals that first track, though the rest certainly isn't a let-down. Like many young singers, he veers towards over-achievement mode by going to the maximum in aria after aria, so much that at times you feel like you're being yelled at. You win, Bryan! Now he needs to take a cue from Joyce DiDonato and give greater consideration to what he's saying with his voice. And, to his credit, he gives the narrative aspects of the *Les Troyens* excerpt their due, partly thanks to his fine French diction.

Though Hymel explores the conflicted introspection of his characters, he tends to fall back on what he already knows in some of the lesser-known arias with the same kinds of attacks and phrasing. But such observations only have quibble status. The total package is first-class: the arias were recorded over several days (which no doubt made consistent high-voltage heroism possible) with the good Prague Philharmonia under the knowing direction of Emmanuel Villaume. Producer Michael Fine beautifully captures the highlights in

Hymel's voice which are less noticeable in the opera house. The package includes full translations. **David Patrick Stearns**

## 'Sémélé'

**Destouches** Sémélé – excs **Handel** L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato, HWV55 – Sweet bird (exc). Semele – Endless pleasure; Hence, Iris; Oh sleep. Theodora – Overture; To thee, thou glorious son of worth. Tra le fiamme, HWV170. Concerto grosso, Op 3 No 4, HWV315

**Marais** Sémélé – excs

**Chantal Santon Jeffery** *sop* **Mérodie Ruvio** *contr*

**Les Ombres / Margaux Blanchard, Sylvain Sartre**

Mirare © MIR260 (78' • DDD)



It seems an excellent idea to take extracts from different settings of the story of Semele.

Marais's *tragédie lyrique Sémélé* (1709) yields a picturesque march played by two stratospheric piccolos, a warmly lyrical *ouverture* and a charming chaconne (propelled by colourful interludes for oboes, bassoon and flutes); a lovely brief arietta 'Quel bruit nouveau' has emotively dissonant suspensions for flutes and violins, and is sung poignantly by Chantal Santon Jeffery. The libretto by Antonie Houdar de La Motte also provided inspiration a decade later for a cantata by his cousin and former musketeer André Cardinal Destouches; it's never been recorded before, so the lack of an English translation of the text is short-sighted, but Mérodie Ruvio narrates Semele's death with dignity and finesse.

I'm baffled by the ensuing Handelian hotchpotch. There are only three clichéd choices from *Semele*. To flesh things out, *Les Ombres* chuck in the concerto Op 3 No 4, a short instrumental extract from *Penseroso*'s long aria 'Sweet bird' and, most puzzlingly, the sublime religiosity of Didymus and Theodora's profound duet 'To thee, thou glorious son of worth'. Cardinal Pamphilij's poem for the Roman cantata *Tra le fiamme* (1707/08) compares a risky amorous infatuation with a moth being drawn to the flame (and also alludes to Icarus flying too close to the sun), so one might argue it has a loose literary parallel with Ovid's cautionary tale about the ambitious Semele being burnt to cinders by her insistence on seeing Jupiter in his true form. The over-spiced interpretation by all participants isn't exactly an endless pleasure and Jeffery's intrusive embellishments are unconvincing – for example, completing a rushed account of the first aria by whizzing up the octave. **David Vickers**

# REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

## Great pianists in contrast

Scriabin centenary contributions from Vladimir Horowitz, and wonderful performances of Dohnányi by the composer

In the centenary year of Alexander Scriabin's death, two piano reissues stand out as exceptional, one featuring the composer's son-in-law Vladimir Sofronitsky (Melodiya MELCD100 2237, actually released last year), the other a celebrated exponent of Scriabin in the West, **Vladimir Horowitz**. Central to any great Scriabin collection is the fiery luminescence of a crucial late piece, *Vers la flamme*. According to Horowitz, Scriabin's inspiration was the conviction that a constant accumulation of heat would cause the destruction of the world, the music's fearsome *crescendo* driving us, ultimately, 'towards the flame'. A pity, then, that Sony's new collection only includes Horowitz's 1972 studio recording, which features a rather abrupt ending (Sofronitsky's from 1959 is rather better judged). The swifter and infinitely more intense February 1949 version included in the multi-CD set 'Vladimir Horowitz Live at Carnegie Hall' is not featured as part of the current release, and neither are certain other Carnegie Scriabin performances, which is a shame because there was room for them.

Still, what we do have is essential for any Scriabin collection. Two versions of the Ninth Sonata are included, one from 1953 (the famous 25th Anniversary Concert), the other (Horowitz's preferred option) from 1965, 'The Historic Return'. Comparing them is fascinating, the earlier and swifter version (6'42" as opposed to 9'19" in '65) coltish and viscerally exciting but balanced on a nerve's edge, whereas the one from Horowitz's return to Carnegie more suggests tragedy than neurosis. The programme is arranged into three sections, 'The Victor Studio Recordings', 'The Columbia Studio Recordings' and 'Live Recordings'. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Horowitz's playing of Scriabin is his ability to summon numerous dynamics simultaneously, the


F sharp *Poème*, Op 32 No 1, being a good example. Breathtaking filigree is illustrated in his handling of the gnomic F sharp Study, Op 42 No 3; expansive grandeur in the opening *Drammatico* of the Third Sonata; that celebrated *bel canto* voicing in the C major Prelude, Op 11 No 1. But when it comes to the tumultuous Etude, Op 42 No 5, it's Sofronitsky who really makes the earth move, a performance of quite staggering power. Still, as I've said, both sets are indispensable.

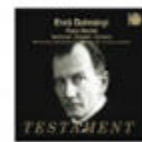
Hear pianist-composer **Ernő Dohnányi**'s mercurial account of Schubert's Sonata in G major, D894, taped at Florida State University in 1959, and you're in a different world entirely: swift and impulsive, driven by immense forward momentum, the first movement (with no repeat) especially. Beethoven's G major Sonata, Op 31 No 1, suits this playfully combative approach rather more comfortably, with variegated phrasing and altered speeds wherever motifs are repeated. Note, too, the way Dohnányi phrases the *Adagio grazioso*, a striking degree of fantasy always implicit, the lilting, at times even halting, sway to the pulse. Pieces by Dohnányi himself complete the programme, whereas the second CD, recorded partially in Edinburgh in 1956 and partially by the BBC 20 years earlier (in not terribly good sound), is devoted entirely to Dohnányi's music. The Edinburgh tracks are the best-recorded of the set, the list of works represented: Op 11 Nos 2 and 3 (the most famous and most romantic of Dohnányi's Rhapsodies, albeit beset by pitch problems), Op 17 No 1, Op 23 No 3, Op 29, Op 32a No 6 (the most famous movement from *Ruralia hungarica*), Op 36 (*Symphonic Minutes*, partially complete, with Dohnányi both as soloist and conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra), and Op 41 Nos 2 and 4. Wonderful playing, this, warts, fluffs 'n' all.


Pristine Audio has also come up with some previously unissued Dohnányi, again from Florida State University, this time from 1953, a performance of Beethoven's Violin Sonata, Op 96, with **Albert Spalding**, two superb artists captured in middling sound a little beyond their prime, the performance resembling a rough but fairly accurate charcoal sketch of what might have been a glorious oil painting 15 or so years earlier. I love Dohnányi's affectionate arpeggio at the start of the *Adagio espressivo*, and the warmth of Spalding's response to what is surely one of Beethoven's most glorious melodies. The balance might not be all one would wish for but it's good enough to gain a fair idea of how the playing sounded live. The same CD also includes a *Kreutzer* Sonata from 1952 (Boston University) with pianist Jules Wolfers, marginally more secure in terms of Spalding's violin but with less distinctive piano-playing. The disc opens with Spalding on top form: the two Beethoven *Romances* recorded in 1935 with André Benoist at the piano, the First enjoying its first-ever CD release. The state-of-the-art transfers are by Mark Obert-Thorn.

### THE RECORDINGS




**Scriabin**   
**Vladimir Horowitz** *pf*  
Sony Classical  
© 88875 03837-2



**Beethoven. Dohnányi. Schubert**  
**Ernő Dohnányi** *pf*  
Testament  SBT2 1505



**'Albert Spalding plays Beethoven'** Albert Spalding; Ernő Dohnányi; Jules Wolfers; André Benoist  
Pristine Audio  PACM096





'Fiery luminescence': Horowitz plays Scriabin in an indispensable set on Sony, reissued for the composer's centenary

## Fournier in Lucerne

Let me deal with the encore first! A Casals commemoration from September 1976 finds **Pierre Fournier** and the Festival Strings Lucerne under Matthias Bamert performing *The Song of the Birds*. It's utter perfection in every respect, a fair match for the master himself, whether for its rapt phrasing or warm-textured tonal projection. I played it again and again and cannot imagine anyone who connects with the soul of the cello not responding likewise.

The principal items are scarcely less engaging. Sadly István Kertész never got round to supplementing his LSO Dvořák symphony cycle for Decca with a commercial recording of the Cello Concerto, so it is especially fortuitous that Audite should have located this 1967 Lucerne tape with Fournier as the soloist and the Swiss Festival Orchestra under Kertész's baton, a performance that combines great tenderness with the kind of outdoors-style exuberance that was so characteristic of Kertész's Dvořák style. Climaxes blaze and Fournier's phrasing has a tenderness about it that recalls the best of his earlier recordings of the same work. Furthermore, the stereo sound is excellent (as it is in the Casals), whereas the 1962 relay of Saint-Saëns's First Concerto with Jean Martinon conducting the RTF Philharmonic Orchestra enjoys a clear but relatively constricted mono sound frame, the performance similarly vital, with lyrically arched phrasing and a typically animated account of the orchestral score. Quite a find this, and much to be recommended.

## THE RECORDING



**Dvořák. Saint-Saëns. Casals**  
Pierre Fournier vc various orchs  
/ Jean Martinon; Matthias  
Bamert; István Kertész  
Audite (M) AUDITE95 628

## Bruckner pioneer

London-born **Frederick Charles Adler**, a Mahler acolyte in his younger years and perhaps best known nowadays for his Mahler recordings, was also a distinguished conductor of Bruckner symphonies. Adler's principal brainchild, as far as record collectors are concerned, was the SPA label, which released a number of recording premieres, not least, in addition to key Mahler and Bruckner, Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* and Stravinsky's early Symphony in E flat. All is clearly reported in Mark W Kluge's excellent booklet for the current collection with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra which features performances that, while hardly the last word in orchestral or indeed sonic refinement, are at the very least gripping in their sense of drama and rhetoric. Additionally, the set parades textual variants that nowadays are very rarely heard. As to specific editions (and here, as so often, I am much indebted to John F Berky's Anton Bruckner Versions Discography at [abruckner.com/discography](http://abruckner.com/discography)), the First Symphony is presented in the 1893 edition (Doblinger) of the 1891 version; the Third in the 1890 thorough revision: Bruckner with Joseph and Franz Schalk, ed Theodor Raettig; the Sixth in the 1899 edition (Doblinger),

ed Cyrill Hynais; and the Ninth in the 1903 Edition (Doblinger), ed Loewe.

We're also offered the First Mass with soloists, the Frederick Guthrie Choir and the Vienna Radio Orchestra, and the Overture in G minor. Perhaps the most compelling performance is the Sixth – the only historic recording of the Doblinger publication – where the first movement in particular benefits from Adler's grasp of Bruckner's tempo relations. The Mass too has many moments of genuine fervour. Sound-wise, AZ Snyder's 2014 transfers are wholly excellent and students of Bruckner interpretation should find this set entirely absorbing.

## THE RECORDING



**'F' Charles Adler conducts Bruckner'**  
Vienna SO / F Charles Adler  
Music & Arts  
(M) (5) CD1283

## Dorati's Sleeping Beauty

**Antal Dorati** was a dab hand with Tchaikovsky's ballets, having recorded the complete *Swan Lake* once, *The Sleeping Beauty* twice and *The Nutcracker* three times, all three works represented by a version with the Minneapolis Symphony. In April 2014 I featured in these pages Opus Kura's reissue of Dorati's 1955 Mercury *Sleeping Beauty*, a clean-sounding transfer taken from American pressings, the originals somewhat hollow but with plenty of impact. Now The Dorati Edition has come up with a rival transfer, taken from Philips's four-LP pressing of the Mercury tapes, a superior vinyl source (it would seem) where widened groove widths accommodate a fuller, cleaner, more dynamic sound picture, with no sense of hollowness. Excellent surfaces mean that for most of the time you could as well be listening to CDs based on Mercury's own mastertapes, so if you've not as yet purchased the Opus Kura set you might care to investigate this latest transfer. If you need to sample, try Act 3, 'The Wedding', or the Prologue, which are remarkable for their realism (truly Living Presence) and the wide stretch of dynamics. Rarely have I heard transfers from LP that sound so wholly effective. (C)

## THE RECORDING



**Tchaikovsky**  
The Sleeping Beauty  
**The Dorati Edition**  
(M) (2) ADE019/20  
[dorati-society.org.uk](http://dorati-society.org.uk)

# Books



## Guy Rickards on a book exploring music through CD cover design:

*'An image of multiplying bacteria illustrates – illuminates, one could say – the internal organic process of Holmboe's music'*



## Peter Dickinson reads a new biography of Frederick Delius:

*'This is not a detailed biography but there is a connected narrative linking the works themselves'*

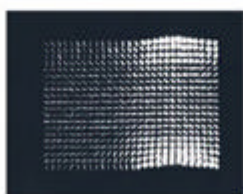
## Seeing New Music

### Contemporary Classical Music Through the Eyes of a Graphic Designer

By Denise Burt

Elevator, HB, 72pp, £30

ISBN 978-8-79979-690-8



Denise Burt is a New Zealand-born, Copenhagen-

resident graphic designer who for the past 13 years has designed classical CD booklet covers, mostly featuring contemporary Danish or American music. Over 12 years, Burt has quietly revolutionised the way Dacapo Records looked at the front covers of their discs, first by replacing the once ubiquitous red frame with a white (or sometimes black) headline template for the text, thereby allowing the artwork to dominate the visual impact of each release. Eventually she persuaded the label to dispense with logos and much of the text from the front altogether – ironically achieving a more unique style than their classical competitors (although this is a not unfamiliar approach in the world of commercial pop and rock). The result is that Burt's designs now supply a visual guide or hook for the prospective buyer to assess the content on an instinctive, almost emotive level rather than just as a matter of repertoire choice.

By her own admission, Burt had no musical training, so in parallel to reprogramming Dacapo's visual imagery has come her own discovery of contemporary classical music, driven by the recordings she designed the covers for. The process was mutually beneficial, as she herself has said elsewhere: 'I often listen to new music for my own pleasure now. I've been converted!' This intriguing new book charts that conversion through 24 of her designs, mostly for Dacapo but also Cantaloupe Music (for composers in the Bang on a Can collective), by illustrating the result and discussing the processes behind each.

What is refreshing about this story is her openness and honesty. Burt includes her mistakes and failures as well as successes, even the white headline template she had argued for at Dacapo, which she came to feel was a compromise of her mission to 'conquer the cover'. While I had rather liked the now ancient red design, I had noticed over the years when reviewing and purchasing Dacapo discs how the redesign altered my perception of the label into something more modern and forward-looking, less cosily Danish.

The early phases of her conquest of the cover are illustrated in the introduction, which graphically charts the progress from the legacy red-frame design – produced as a footnote on the fourth page (the pages are not numbered) – through a set of nine of her earlier covers from 2003 (her first Dacapo design, for *From the Merry Life of a Spy*) to the first logo-less issue, of Nørgård's *A Light Hour*, in 2010. Nørgård issues feature prominently in the selected two dozen designs (reproduced as full page artwork and bereft of logos and – in most cases – wordage), and his music, appropriately, challenged Burt in like kind, whether the 'torn tricolour' produced for the opera *Nuit des hommes* (2004) or the fractal-like 'Tree Bender' used for *Libra* and carried over on to the rear inlay and back cover also (2012; as was that for *Titanic*). In one instance, for the disc of Helene Gjerris singing songs by Nørgård, she used a live model – Gjerris herself – in a startling and vivid manner. Other favoured composers include Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen (the cover of *Mixed Company* is almost, by design of Burt and the composer, the abnegation of design), Julia Wolfe and David Lang.

Lang's *death speaks* (Cantaloupe Music, 2013) is a triumph of the designer's art in taking elements from various sources – including a decidedly creepy late Victorian photograph – and fusing them into a wholly new work of art. Of her latest artwork, those for Julia Wolfe's *Steel Hammer* and Lang's *Love Fail* take simple images to encapsulate an element at least of

the music as a narrative image, whereas for Michael Gordon's *Rushes* or Rune Glerup's *dust encapsulated*, ordinary images are sublimated into the abstract to represent something of the composer's art. In the case of Holmboe's 'Chamber Music (I)', an image of multiplying bacteria in a Petri dish illustrates – illuminates, one could say – the internal organic processes of Holmboe's music while standing on its own as a vivid piece of art.

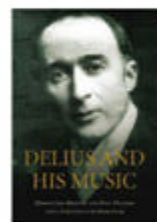
In a cultural climate where there is considerable daily navel-gazing, bewailing even, of how to make classical music – let alone the frightening contemporary stuff – relevant and appealing to today's audiences, this is a book the relevance of which utterly belies the modesty of its scale. Burt's journey shows that familiarity breeds not contempt but informed enjoyment, which she recycles to spread the message further afield in the best way she can, through her art. *Seeing New Music* is beautifully produced and I have found it a delight to read – and to return to. **Guy Rickards**

## Delius and his Music

By Martin Lee-Browne and Paul Guinery

Boydell & Brewer, HB, 560pp, £30

ISBN 987-1-84383-959-0



My enthusiasm for Delius goes back to my childhood, when my father and I would visit a local Delius lover and listen to his 78s. I realised then that Delius was a special kind of composer with devotees for whom his work was supreme. Years later I gave performances of the Violin Sonata No 3 with Ralph Holmes, a truly eloquent Delius interpreter who fortunately recorded the Violin Concerto and the sonatas, with Eric Fenby as pianist. There are several iconic books about Delius, including a biography by his sister, Claire Delius, published in 1935, the year after the composer died. It throws detailed light on the family background –





Portrait of the artwork: Denise Burt on the process of 'seeing' music by Vagn Holmboe and David Lang

she even described their father as a Hitler when he refused to countenance a musical career for his son. It was the intervention of Grieg, who had become a friend of Delius and met his parents for dinner in London in 1888, which finally swayed his father. Thirty years later there was widespread sympathy when it became known that Delius couldn't compose unaided, and the young Fenby offered to help, working with Delius for the last six years of his life. Fenby's *Delius As I Knew Him* was published in 1936 and has been reprinted many times. Fenby collaborated with Ken Russell in the classic biographical film *Song of Summer*

(1968). The crucial role of Beecham in promoting Delius is well known and his characteristic biography *Frederick Delius* was published in 1959: it was even supplied with the five-disc set of the earliest recordings, issued by EMI in 1977.

Christopher Palmer's *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan* (1976) was admired by Fenby, whose letter introduces the book. With no recordings, Fenby tells us: 'Delius's voice was of light, tenor timbre; pleasant, not harsh, but with a drawl. There was no trace of accent that I could detect.' Lionel Carley's two volumes of letters and two books are a mine of

information surrounding Delius and his entire international context, while the late Robert Threlfall's books and catalogues have provided valuable archives. The Delius Trust and later Delius Society have carried the torch since the composer's death and secured his reputation.

Paul Guinery states in his introduction that there has been no thorough and comprehensive study of Delius's music, and he and Martin Lee-Browne aim to fill that gap. Guinery points out that opinion about Delius's music from 1891 to today has been 'totally divided, but on balance probably more against than for'. That seems severe, but in a BBC talk as long ago as 1954 Beecham made a similar assessment: 'There seem to be no half shades of opinion about his music. One either admires and loves it, or despises and condemns it.' The reasons, Beecham said, are the 'almost undervative character of the music and its rejection...of traditional methods of composition'. Sixty years later we can jettison the idea that Delius was basically a formless rhapsodist. In his foreword to this book Sir Mark Elder writes: 'His most significant works are certainly among the greatest this country has produced,' a view supported in John Bridcut's BBC4 film, *Delius: Composer, Lover, Enigma*.

The authors identify four defining moments and influences in Delius's life – the Norwegian mountains, fjords and countryside; Thomas F Ward, who taught him in Florida; meeting Grieg; and meeting his wife Jelka. This is not a detailed biography but there is a connected narrative linking the works themselves. It's not a cover-to-cover read, either, but consists of programme notes – described as analyses, best studied with the score – with many music examples, all reset in high quality. Every single work is discussed and reception history is plentifully provided with reviews at all periods, some so fatuous that they might well have been left out. There's a catalogue of works and Delius's student record from the Leipzig Conservatorium, which shows that he failed to attend several of his courses but his 'moral demeanour' was 'exemplary' – if only they knew! Tasmin Little's attempts in 1997 to trace a child with a black mistress are treated very briefly and now seem to have petered out. The programmes for the Delius Festivals in 1929 and 1946 are listed. The book is handsomely produced and reasonably priced, making it a useful resource where the balance must now be more for than against Delius.

Peter Dickinson

# Classics RECONSIDERED



In Sibelius Year, **Andrew Achenbach** and **Guy Rickards** return to a classic DG recording of the Fourth Symphony – Karajan's 1965 version with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra



## Jean Sibelius

Symphony No 4

**Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra /**

**Herbert von Karajan**

DG The Originals 2 (M) 457 748-2GOR2

(originally released as 138974, 6/66.

Recorded in Jesus-Christus-Kirche, Dahlem, Berlin in February, May and September 1965)

The Fourth Symphony is generally agreed to be Sibelius at his greatest: but because he makes absolutely no concession to popular success, it is the least played of all. Whether this latest recording will win the work new friends, I don't know. It is far

and away the best: just listen to how the double-basses 'tell' in the opening bars, while the whole sound is really gorgeous, with exactly the right amount of resonance to bring it alive. The strings have a superb quality, the brass is splendid, and the range of this recording is remarkable.

Karajan's tempo for this [first] movement is almost as slow as Ernest Ansermet's (and that's saying something). I cannot see how *allegro molto vivace* can be taken to indicate this easy-going treatment, especially as the scherzo must offer the greatest possible contrast to the movements on either side

of it. That is why I question whether this record will win new friends for the music. In the finale, however, Karajan is certainly better than his most recent rival, Ansermet, who is hopelessly slow.

It is impossible to recommend, only possible to say that this new Karajan recording obviously supersedes his earlier one and that Ansermet is certainly not to be preferred. There are those who insist on fine sound and for them this is obviously the record. Plus, the playing is superb and there's a very great deal that is wonderfully well interpreted. **Trevor Harvey** June 1966

**Andrew Achenbach** Let's be clear: there have been few more loyal champions of Sibelius than Karajan. It was a relationship that stretched all the way back to 1938, when the budding maestro was invited by Swedish Radio to conduct the elusive Sixth Symphony in Stockholm. When Karajan then became conductor for life of the Berlin Philharmonic, the maestro was adamant that the uncompromising Fourth be included in his first concert.

**Guy Rickards** The Fourth is both a pivotal work in Sibelius's output and his most extreme utterance. At its premiere, people were so stunned by what seemed an aberrant work that many could not make eye-contact with him afterwards. Such a reaction affected the already self-critical composer hugely and his travails with its successors started there, whether in public (the Fifth Symphony with its three different versions) or in private (the long gestations of Nos 6-7), culminating finally in the so-called 'Silence of Järvenpää'.

**AA** Karajan left us three commercial recordings of the symphony. The first, from

July 1953 with the Philharmonia for Columbia, drew fulsome praise from Lionel Salter, always a stickler on technical matters (5/54). Similarly, in a letter to the record's producer, Walter Legge, the composer waxed lyrical: 'I have always been a great admirer of Mr v Karajan, and his magnificent recording of my works has given me the keenest satisfaction. Esp in the 4th Symphony, his great artistic line and the inner beauty have deeply impressed me.' (A pity, though, about the third trombone's clunking misreading in the first movement five bars after fig C!)

**GR** I suspect there's an element of Sibelius the conductor appreciating a fellow professional there! I think the Fourth was crucial to Karajan's relationship with Sibelius's music generally: the desolation of the expressive writing, its bleak, colourless tonic 'key' (A minor), what he meant by 'Glocken' in the finale (bells or glockenspiel), its compelling atmosphere and sense of struggle, hard-won and exhausted at the close. It's no coincidence that Karajan tended to focus on the later works: he never conducted the Third

Symphony, for example. Sibelius's biographer, Erik Tawaststjerna, appreciated this and inscribed Karajan's copy of his biography to the 'only conductor who understands the Fourth Symphony'.

**AA** Assessing Karajan's stereo successor for DG, Trevor Harvey was bowled over by the quality of the orchestral playing and expressed a strong preference for it over Ansermet's then recent Decca rival (5/64). By the time Karajan's final (December 1976) version appeared on EMI, the Fourth's discography had swelled impressively, and included distinguished rivals from Lorin Maazel and the VPO (Decca, 4/69 – my own introduction to this masterpiece)...

**GR** ...and mine too!...

**AA** ...Berglund and the Bournemouth SO (EMI, 6/77) and Sir Colin Davis and the Boston SO (Philips, 8/77). Robert Layton described it (Karajan's third recording, 5/78) as 'magnificent and powerful' and, comparing it with the DG account, noted how 'Karajan's tempos are now broader in





each of the four movements, particularly in the slow movement where he eloquently conveys the other-worldly quality of its landscape'. This is indeed a fearsomely gaunt, enormously imposing statement – and in some ways the most sheerly concentrated and stimulating of Karajan's three Fourths – but it's this present 1965 recording that has acquired classic status down the years.

**GR** For me the broader pace in 1976 was overdone: the music is slow-paced enough without artificially applying the brakes further. Karajan's tempos in 1965 were not without controversy, particularly in the *Allegro molto vivace* scherzo as TH noted, but Karajan's conception of the work carried the day, the expressive focus centring on the slow, third movement which the opening movements spiral down into, and the finale emerges from.

Karajan's interpretation accords – intentionally or otherwise – with the view that the Fourth Symphony is at some level a portrait of Finland in winter, the lowest temperatures occur in the *Il tempo largo* and the ice breaks, at last, in the finale.

**AA** Agreed – that sense of nature's awesome imperturbability and the unrelenting, icy grip of the Finnish winter is indeed potent in this account.

**GR** Tawaststjerna's biography, published well after Karajan's recording, revealed that Sibelius and his brother-in-law, Eero Järnefelt, spent time in northern Karelia in the autumn of 1910, prompting thoughts of a pair of tone poems – *The Mountain* and the Mahlerian-sounding *Thoughts of a Wayfarer* – which then evolved into the Fourth Symphony. What Karajan sensed, and communicated so vividly, is the sense of isolation, the desolation of loneliness, of a frozen landscape.

**AA** Karajan himself once remarked on the strong links he felt there existed between Sibelius and Bruckner (for whose music, interestingly, the Finn always had the greatest respect) and how both manage to convey in their greatest works something of the brooding mystery and elemental force of the Urwald – the primeval forest. Those selfsame qualities are present, too, in Karajan's famous version of the Fifth

Symphony recorded around the same time as this Fourth, but whereas that performance also generates an unstoppable thrust and titanic inevitability (has anyone judged the tricky transition half way through the first movement to more unassailably organic effect?), here I don't quite register the same overwhelming wholeness of conception. Was the finale set down at a different time? I see the sessions spanned some eight months.

**GR** What Karajan appreciated was the sense of structure that Sibelius shared with Bruckner – and he wasn't alone: Colin Davis's later recording with the LSO (LSO Live) is strong on both the architecture and the implacability of the elements, less so on the individual's isolation in that landscape.

**AA** At any rate, to my ears the finale doesn't quite attain the same level of tingling concentration that marks out the slow movement in particular. Listen to the finale's riveting development section, where A major and E flat major battle it out to such cataclysmic effect. For me these are some of the most devastatingly powerful pages in all symphonic literature, and I'm not sure that here they quite distil their full intellectual or emotional clout the way they invariably did under, say, Paavo Berglund (who, I should add, once told me that he was a huge admirer of Karajan's Sibelius interpretations). Another bugbear: why does Karajan discreetly apply the brakes in the coda? This music is all the more unnerving when it's allowed to speak for itself.

**GR** His way with the finale overall doesn't trouble me; if he loosens the reins a little it is his response, I think, to the thaw the music seems to reflect. The deceleration in the coda is a miscalculation, though; as you rightly state, the music does not need it. Was he so used to broadening tempos at the close of a symphony that it was one habit he could not break – even in a passage as far away from a peroration as possible! It is unnecessary, the notes themselves convey exhaustion without the need for interpretational gloss, expiring in a neutral *mezzo-forte*. As the late, great Robert Simpson once commented: 'Who else ever thought of ending a symphony like that?'

In many respects, Berglund's interpretations should have been the benchmark, but the Berlin Philharmonic's playing is on another level altogether and, ultimately, that is what sets Karajan's 1965 account apart. **G**

# THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

## Welsh orchestral music

**Geraint Lewis** traces the development of a tradition through 10 recordings that represent some of the finest music to have emerged from Wales over a period of almost a century and a half

Wales didn't even have a city until King Edward VII elevated Cardiff to such status at a grand ceremony in the opulently Edwardian new City Hall in 1905. There was, however, a Cardiff Orchestral Society and in 1908 it optimistically appointed another charismatic rogue, Thomas Beecham, to be its conductor – dis-appointing him before he even lifted his baton because of a scandalous extramarital court case in which he was front-page news. (The Society, sadly, didn't thrive or survive!) But, without sufficient municipal strength to support any proper orchestras in the Principality, it isn't surprising that

Welsh composers were slow in taking to orchestral writing.

There was, on the other hand, plentiful private industrial wealth and in one remarkable instance a virtual orchestra was established, much earlier, which broke genuinely new ground. Robert Crawshay belonged to a dynasty of iron and coal magnates who by the 1820s had built the hideously imposing Cyfarthfa Castle on the proceeds of making Merthyr Tydfil the largest ironworks in the world. In 1838 he established his own professional 'band' by employing an orchestra of brass players drawn from London and abroad. He was, in effect,

creating his own Eszterháza-on-Taff and the Cyfarthfa Band gradually garnered international acclaim. Most of the music they played was arranged from source by a wizard called George D'Artney and was cosmopolitan in flavour.

The one exception was provided by Merthyr-born Joseph Parry, who had started his working life in 1850 as a boy of nine – underground – while growing up to the sound of the band above-ground. A spell in America brought him a reputation back home and after 1872 he became Wales's first professional composer, but he didn't forget Cyfarthfa or Merthyr as he gained national celebrity, as the pioneering *Tydfil Overture* shows. Parry also wrote operas, oratorios, even a symphony and string quartet, but attained immortality only with the part-song 'Myfanwy' and a handful of hymn tunes including *Aberystwyth*. He set the template, however, and inspired others to follow his lead.

The first major talent to emerge, Morfydd Llwyn Owen, died tragically in 1918, aged 26, before her astonishing potential could be fulfilled, though an orchestral score *Morfa Rhuddlan* (sadly not commercially available) was played by the LSO in 1920 and its recent revival at the 2014 Gregynog Festival proves it to have been a work of tantalising achievement. Her legend haunted the post-war generation, represented most vividly by Grace Williams. By the time Grace settled back in Wales from London after the Second World War, a fledgling BBC Welsh Orchestra was established in Cardiff. The individual boxes opposite trace the evolution of orchestral eloquence, amounting at times to brilliance, within successive generations of Welsh composers alongside the gradual growth of Wales's only dedicated symphony orchestra which so audibly flourishes today in concert and on disc. ⑥



Alan Hoddinott: Welsh composer of 10 symphonies and more than 20 concertos





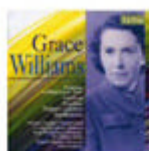
**10 Joseph Parry**  
(1841–1903)  
**Tydfil Overture**  
(c1876)

The Wallace Collection /

Simon Wright

Nimbus ⑤ NI5470 (2/97)

Parry includes a typical proto-hymn tune within this impressively sustained structure which he both 'composed and arranged' (ie orchestrated) for the bespoke Cyfarthfa Band. This amazing account on replica brass instruments brought it back to life in 1995 and proved that Wales's first Mus Doc (Cantab) is still all too easily underestimated.



**9 Grace Williams**  
(1906–77)

**Sea Sketches (1944)**

English Chamber Orchestra /  
David Atherton

Lyrta ⑥ SRCD323 (6/95)

A devoted pupil of Ralph Vaughan Williams and common-sense friend to Benjamin Britten, Grace Williams's bracing set of 'sea pictures' for strings also reveals the luxuriant sounds of Mahler and Strauss's Vienna, where she spent a year studying in the late 1920s. But she thrived at home on the Glamorgan coast and lived a spartan life writing music with a distinctive lyrical thread.



**8 Daniel Jones**  
(1912–93)

**Symphony No 4, 'In Memory of Dylan Thomas' (1954)**

Royal Philharmonic

Orchestra / Sir Charles Groves

Lyrta ⑥ SRCD329

Daniel Jones had the good fortune (and misfortune too) of being a planet orbiting the sun of Dylan Thomas's genius. A childhood friend, he became his literary executor and wrote the first music for *Under Milk Wood*. But without him he lost an essential sparring partner and it is sadly telling that No 4 of 13 symphonies is arguably the most eloquent.



**7 William Mathias**  
(1934–92)

**Harp Concerto, Op 50 (1970)**

Osian Ellis *hp* London  
Symphony Orchestra /

David Atherton

Lyrta ⑥ SRCD325 (12/73<sup>R</sup>, 7/95)

The light and dark of Wales's past and present (in words by RS Thomas) lie behind this beguiling score, which also enshrines the soul of the national instrument. William Mathias had a medieval Celtic sensibility that he engages to encompass radiant landscapes 'plotted and pieced' alongside brooding elegiac power within an ingenious neo-classical form.



**6 Alun Hoddinott**  
(1929–2008)

**Symphony No 5, Op 81**  
(1972–73)

Royal Philharmonic

Orchestra / Andrew Davis

Lyrta ⑥ SRCD331 (3/74<sup>R</sup>, 2/97)

Rhetorical debate and sensuous expression march hand-in-hand through this compelling two-movement structure. These intuitively Welsh characteristics are given a wider resonance by the presence of Tuscan cowbells and an Italianate mastery of form and content. Hoddinott never wastes a word or gesture in music stamped with individuality.



**5 William Mathias**  
**Helios, Op 76**  
(1977)

BBC Welsh Symphony  
Orchestra / Grant Llewellyn

Nimbus ⑥ NI5343 (6/04)

Having created musical 'landscapes of the mind' in a Welsh context, William Mathias went on to find stimulation too in America and Greece. For a composer too often consigned to the 'church and choral' category, *Helios* represents a remarkable feeling for shimmering orchestral sonorities in painting this archetypal journey from darkness to dazzling light.



**4 John Metcalf**  
(born 1946)

**Paradise Haunts...**

(1995, orch 1999)

Thomas Bowes *vn* BBC

National Orchestra of Wales / Grant Llewellyn

Signum ⑥ SIGCD103 (11/07)

Inspired by a sentence from film-maker Derek Jarman about his last garden in Dungeness - 'Paradise haunts gardens and it haunts mine' - Metcalf finds an entrancing variation structure to underpin and sustain a stream-of-consciousness flowing of lyrical rapture which enshrines the Welsh tradition of improvisation on a strict ground.



**3 Huw Watkins**  
(born 1976)

**Sonata for Cello and Eight Instruments (1999)**

Paul Watkins *vc*

Nash Ensemble / Ian Brown

NMC ⑥ NMCD164 (9/12)

In 1998 Faber Music asked its composers to nominate younger figures who deserved to be commissioned. Thomas Adès chose Huw Watkins, who wrote this coruscatingly brilliant chamber/orchestral score, aged 23, for his cellist/conductor brother Paul. Huw's Violin Concerto (2010) is a masterpiece richly deserving of a commercial recording.

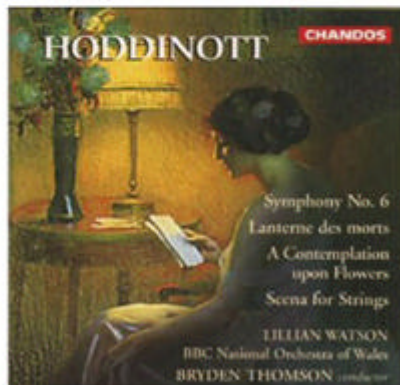


**2 Guto Puw (born 1971)**  
**'...onyt agoraf y drws...'**  
(2007)

BBC National Orchestra of  
Wales / Jac van Steen

Signum ⑥ SIGCD378 (9/14)

Guto Puw was taught in Bangor by John Pickard and *Gramophone's* contemporary expert Pwyll ap Siôn, and enjoyed early successes at the National Eisteddfod. He was the BBC National Orchestra of Wales's first Resident Composer (2006–10) and this Mabinogion-based work was commissioned for the 2007 BBC Proms, making telling spatial use of the Royal Albert Hall.



**1**

**Alun Hoddinott** *Lanternes des morts*, Op 105 No 2 (1981)

BBC National Orchestra of Wales / Bryden Thomson

Chandos ⑥ CHAN8762 (12/89)

From his popular Clarinet Concerto of 1949 to the posthumously premiered *Taliesin* in 2009, Hoddinott wrote 10 symphonies, more than 20 concertos and a host of orchestral works with vivid extramusical sources of inspiration. Although he was Welsh to the core, he relished travelling abroad and this atmospheric yet symphonically cogent score was inspired by

the medieval Death Lanterns of Sarlat in the Dordogne region of France, where lights would be placed in the upper windows to herald the flight of souls as white doves.

To explore recordings from Geraint Lewis's Specialist's Guide, courtesy of Qobuz, please visit [gramophone.co.uk/specialistsguide](http://gramophone.co.uk/specialistsguide)

qobuz

# THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

## *From clandestine Catholic ritual to Anglican worship*

Despite their origin, **Byrd's Masses** are an inherent part of the British choral tradition. **Fabrice Fitch** curbs his preference for a certain type of scoring when making his recommendations

William Byrd's three Masses occupy so cherished a place in the English choral tradition that it's worth emphasising the covert circumstances in which they were created. Their date of composition is unknown, although the background can be deduced. From the mid-1570s, the position of English Catholics became increasingly insecure. While Elizabeth I was personally inclined towards tolerance, the activities of Jesuit missionaries, as well as more politically motivated interference from abroad, forced her hand. Even nobles and aristocracy who clung to the old faith – including some of Byrd's staunchest patrons – were obliged to practise it more discreetly. Celebration of the Catholic Mass became a strictly private matter, as priests were literally smuggled in to officiate. It was under such clandestine conditions that Byrd's Masses were most likely first performed. When he eventually published them in the 1590s they appeared without title pages, and the printer, Byrd's habitual collaborator Thomas East, didn't put his name to them.

This subversive narrative, though appealing to modern sensibilities, is a touch misleading. Certainly, the publication of Mass settings contravened the regime's policy at a time when recusants (the name given to unregenerate Catholics) were being fined, imprisoned, and worse: one of the incriminating documents in the possession of a recusant at the time of the Gunpowder Plot is said to have been a copy

of one of Byrd's collections of Latin church music, *Gradualia*. But Byrd was no ordinary recusant – his long-term patrons included the queen, who repeatedly intervened to spare him from the fines and prosecution habitually imposed on his co-religionists. Like most artists living in troubled times and knowing their own worth, he must have known what he could get away with; after all, his name was stamped on every page of East's 'bootleg' editions! Besides, the Masses were reprinted within a few years, indicating a wider demand than is consistent with strict clandestinity. Finally, the secrecy attendant on Catholic worship does not necessarily imply small or inexperienced forces: high-ranking Catholics with substantial households could afford the necessary outlay on high feasts, including fine singers. One participant at such an event, at which Byrd was present, noted with satisfaction that he could imagine himself attending High Mass just as he had in the old days.

### OPTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE

Byrd's Masses are unusual within his output. In contrast to the expansiveness of many of the motets, they are compact and restrained. There is little word repetition; word-painting is used selectively; and overtly expressive passages, such as the final *Agnus Dei* of the four- and five-voice settings, are as remarkable for their scarcity as for their quality. Yet the Masses are anything but nondescript. Byrd was in a unique position historically: no Masses

of consequence had been written in England for about 30 years, and obvious nods to continental models are comparatively few. Many of these works took the form of 'parody' Masses (that is, they were based on a previous polyphonic composition), whereas Byrd's are freely composed – a few references to his older English colleagues notwithstanding. All this gave him considerable licence to invent, and his solutions to individual problems are ingenious. The *Agnus Dei* settings, for instance, are cast as single movements, not two or three as was usual. In the four-voice one he begins with two voices and adds one with each statement, which heightens the affective charge of that final invocation. Vocally speaking, too, the Masses are quite restrained by Byrd's standards. Compactness, directness, and relative ease of performance account for their popularity today.

But what on earth might Byrd have made of that popularity? It is now roughly a century since his Masses were integrated into the renascent English choral tradition through the pioneering efforts of Sir Richard Terry at Westminster Cathedral. This militantly Catholic music became part of a predominantly Anglican tradition, so much so that for many today Byrd's music cannot be dissociated from that tradition in its sonority and interpretative habits; and, directly or indirectly, the majority of available recordings originate within it. In recent years, some ensembles have sought to move away from this 'Establishment' Byrd, offering more full-throated, edgier readings reflecting the music's embattled origins. Admittedly, these artists (such as Gallicantus and Plus Ultra) originate from the same tradition, and have not yet turned their attention to the Masses. None the less, the emergence of this trend augurs well, as does the number of recordings from European and American ensembles.

There are just under a dozen recordings of all three Masses, and considerably more present individual ones (although the three-voice Mass has never been recorded on its own). I divide the discography broadly into three types of ensemble: collegiate choirs with boy trebles; mixed professional adult choirs; and smaller or soloist ensembles. Apart from choices of scoring (most variably in the three-voice work, which can be performed either with high voices or male altos on the top line), the most striking contrasts are obtained through changes of tempo in and between the longer sections (at 'Qui tollis' in the *Gloria*, 'Et resurrexit' in the *Credo*, or





William Byrd: 'no ordinary recusant'

imparts bloom and transparency – an interpretation that manages both grandeur and intimacy. Unlike other collegiate choirs, there are no audible weak links, and the lower voices are never shouty at the top of their range, a problem one encounters in most recordings in this group. The changes of tempo within sections are managed unobtrusively. Of all the stand-alone accounts of this work, this is one of the most satisfying.

Winchester, under David Hill, is even more distinctive, and as far from the 'churchy' aesthetic as possible; but the bracing approach to the faster sections is undermined in the more reflective passages, with the contrast between them seeming overdone. Under Ledger's direction, King's College is monumental without being ponderous. The changes of tempo are about as marked as those of Winchester Cathedral (with a near-symphonic *allargando* for the final 'dona nobis pacem'), but the more uniform approach to diction and phrasing makes the resulting contrasts seem less extreme. The slower sections have a gentle lyricism, and the men's voices are generally well matched.

The most consistent complete recording of recent years is the latest, from **Westminster Cathedral Choir** under Martin Baker, issued last year. As I noted at the time, it treats tempos unobtrusively and avoids an overly reverential approach. The treble sound is pleasing, too, but the cathedral's acoustic becomes an issue when the counterpoint is at its densest and the basses are at the top of their range.

No longer hidden: the first page of the Altus Partbook of Byrd's four-voice Mass

'Hosanna' in the *Sanctus*). Although this practice features in many Renaissance Mass performances, it is a modern-day convention; there is no basis for it in Byrd's notation. Some ensembles dispense with it altogether, marking the change of mood in the text through subtler means.

#### COLLEGIATE CHOIRS WITH TREBLES

Perhaps not surprisingly, recordings from collegiate choirs form the most consistent grouping in terms of both quality and approach. **Winchester Cathedral Choir** and **Christ Church Cathedral Choir** offer very similar accounts of all three: in the latter, Stephen Darlington's trebles are more homogeneous, but his *allargandos* at the ends of movements are a touch

portentous. Alone of all this group, Darlington pitches his three-voice Mass high enough to accommodate the trebles, which has a pleasing lightness and delicacy. In a similar aesthetic, the mixed **Choir of Gonville & Caius College** offers a five-voice Mass of which one might say that it is 'a good example of its type' – albeit a predictable one, up to the extended *rallentando* leading to the very last cadence.

More distinctive are the stand-alone readings of the five-voice Mass from the **Choir of King's College** under Philip Ledger, **Winchester Cathedral Choir** for Hyperion, and **Westminster Abbey Choir**, all three of which sport very fine trebles. The most rounded is Westminster Abbey, which is light on its feet, with an acoustic that





Revelatory: the Deller Consort made the first soloists-only recording of all three Masses – their singing ‘bursts with personality and a sense of devotion’

So while the quality of the collegiate recordings is sustained, few stand out – or so I thought until I listened to the earliest of all, the complete set from the **Choir of King's College**, Cambridge, under David Willcocks. It is also the lengthiest, which initially made me a little nervous. In the event, my fears were unfounded: these are reflective, detailed readings, all the voices being evenly matched and of equal quality (not always the case in collegiate ensembles). The male altos take the top part in the three-voice Mass (the hardest to convey of the three) and are very convincing. As for the trebles, their tone is deeper than that of most of their successors. Tempos are certainly slower, but phrasing and control are so well sustained that this is rarely noticeable. Finally, the sound of the recording belies its age. Although an outlier within the group, this is an interpretation of real substance.

### PROFESSIONAL ADULT CHOIRS

Mixed choirs are not my preferred medium for performing most Renaissance polyphony, unless the number of written parts dictates it, naturally. Those who'd take issue with this might respond, 'Surely it depends on the choir!' Of course it does; in practice, the range of technical proficiency within this category is greater than with soloists

or collegiate institutions. Technical shortcomings can rule certain performances (however well meant) out of contention. This is the case with Italian choir **Opera Polifonica** (four-voice Mass) and especially the Swedish **Hägersten Motet Choir** (five-voice). Both are beset with problems of vocal quality, ensemble, intonation and uncertain direction. And the complete recording by New York-based **Parthenia XVI** is marred by an excess of direction, one might say – namely, the decision to double some voices at the octave in the three- and four-voice settings (or to bump others up an octave without doubling), which wreaks havoc with Byrd's counterpoint.

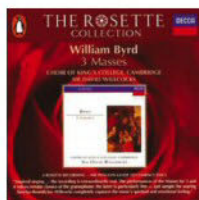
A more subtle approach is that of the **Pro Arte Singers** under Paul Hillier (the only director to have tackled Byrd's complete

Masses more than once). While these voices lack the star quality of his earlier account with the Hilliard Ensemble, or the 'Theatre of Voices' four-voice Mass, these are considered and concise accounts, making few concessions to churchy sentiment, and producing a pleasing intimacy given the size of the choir. It's by some margin the fastest of the complete sets, but this has more to do with the dry acoustic than with a sense of iconoclasm. This is one of the more distinctive alternatives available, though not the most polished technically. More secure, but unresolved, are the accounts of both the four- and five-voice Masses from **Oxford Camerata** and **The Sixteen**. The latter was made in the late 1980s, when Harry Christophers's choir hadn't the focus that has characterised

### HISTORICAL READING WITH CHOIR

**Choir of King's College, Cambridge / Willcocks**  
Decca (M) 476 7090

This reading has remarkable staying power.



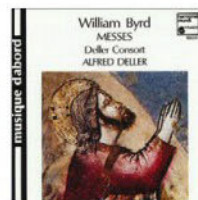
The prevalence of vibrato dates the performance, but for homogeneity and unanimity this choir hasn't been surpassed. The trebles are equally impressive.

### HISTORICAL READING WITH SOLOISTS

**Deller Consort**

Harmonia Mundi (C) HMA19 0211

The oldest of the solo recordings stands out



on many counts, but the sense of intimacy and the Deller's artistry are very moving. Their interpretation imparts a sense of focused devotion.



much of its recent work; meanwhile, Oxford Camerata's tone is clear, bright and intimate in a lightly resonant acoustic. But the hushed tones and very slow tempos of the solemn sections of the longer movements are very much 'Establishment' Byrd, and the extreme tempo shifts and dynamic contrasts that follow them mar otherwise compact, lithe performances.

It may be a feature of English professional ensembles that they sound especially compact. By that reckoning, Philippe Herreweghe's multinational **Collegium Vocale Ghent** has at least a foot in the British Isles. Their superbly controlled five-voice Mass is incomparably the finest single account outside England, though the breakneck speeds chosen for the *Credo* test even Herreweghe's singers. (That said, *Infelix ego*, sung by a soloist and arrestingly gutsy, is worth hearing on its own.) Those who'd expect **The Tallis Scholars'** technically poised complete set to feature in my final selection may find in Collegium Vocale what eludes me in Peter Phillips's ensemble. The poise is the same but the details are more finely etched, and there is a sense of risk-taking that is valuable in music that has tended to be institutionalised. For similar reasons I'm unconvinced by **Stile Antico** in the five-voice Mass: it puts me in mind of recent offerings from The Tallis Scholars, with an updated, 'bigger' sound. As in several of their recordings of English Renaissance warhorses, I struggle to discern a clear interpretative purpose behind the sonority: where is the response to the dissonance at 'Crucifixus', or the sense of contrast at 'Hosanna', for instance?

Another highlight among the 'stand-alones' is the four-voice Mass from the **Choir of New College Oxford** (with no boy trebles, hence their inclusion in this group), who are as understated as Collegium Vocale are edgy. The different elements that make up ensemble singing – beauty of tone and purposefulness in shaping – are held impressively in balance. But the most rounded account from the professional ensembles is the complete set from

**The Cardinal's Musick**. Though plainly within the English choral tradition, its forthright robustness is none the less suggestive of the recusant Byrd. A very compact-sounding cast makes the most of the music's fine detail and expressive potential, and the choices of scoring show considerable independence. The three-voice Mass is taken at a high pitch, even though an ATB distribution would have been equally possible; conversely, the four-voice Mass is scored low, with altos on the top line instead of sopranos. Of all the complete sets, only this one prefaces each Mass with an organ introduction in a chamber acoustic, instantly evocative of the small, even makeshift, chapels in which Byrd might have performed. Sensitively thought through in so many ways, this version is clearly a frontrunner.

### SOLOIST ENSEMBLES

The Cardinal's Musick's recourse to soloists in the more reflective passages blends the best of the choral and the solo approach. All three Masses were first recorded with soloists only by the **Deller Consort** in 1969-70. This must have been as revelatory then as Willcocks's was

a decade before. The singers' vibrato marks the performance out as being from a different era, and there are a few rough edges to be sure (Alfred Deller's mostly, and he also sounds a touch hesitant as the *altus* in the five-voice Mass); but this is exquisite consort singing, bursting with personality and a sense of devotion that seems directed at the music rather than at the mere trappings of devotion.

It was more than 10 years before another soloist ensemble had a go, but **The Hilliard Ensemble's** recording (sadly unavailable for the moment) was worth the wait. Again it is the sense of intimacy that compels, though the straight tone and a greater reserve distinguish the two readings automatically. Some may find the Hilliards too reserved (as did I at first, not having heard them for many years), but few other ensembles make sobriety sound quite so seductive. They were at the top of their game in 1983, which tells in the way they sustain tempos about as slow as Willcocks's with ease. The voices are instantly recognisable, and, to my ear, that of David James in his pomp, commanding his entire range, is one of the most expressive. Like the Deller, the Hilliards

## SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

### DATE / ARTISTS

### RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)

<b>1959-63</b>	<b>Ch of King's Coll, Cambridge</b> / Willcocks 3, 4, 5	Decca (M) 476 7090; Newton (B) 2 8802020 (6/60 <sup>8</sup> ; 10/63 <sup>8</sup> ; 10/92 <sup>9</sup> )
<b>1969-70</b>	<b>Deller Consort</b> / Deller 3, 4, 5	Harmonia Mundi (F) HMA19 0211 (6/79 <sup>9</sup> )
<b>1980</b>	<b>Ch of King's Coll, Cambridge</b> / Ledger 5	EMI (M) 678304-2 (4/82 <sup>9</sup> )
<b>1980-93</b>	<b>Hägersten Motet Ch</b> / Mansson 5	Nosag (M) D NOSAGCD006
<b>1983</b>	<b>The Hilliard Ens</b> / Hillier 3, 4, 5	EMI (M) 763441-2 (5/85 <sup>8</sup> - nla)
<b>1984</b>	<b>The Tallis Scholars</b> / Phillips 3, 4, 5	Gimell (B) 2 CDGIM208 (5/84 <sup>8</sup> ; 3/86 <sup>8</sup> )
<b>1989</b>	<b>Winchester Cath Ch</b> / Hill 3, 4, 5	Eloquence (B) ELQ467 611-2 (12/90 <sup>8</sup> )
<b>1985</b>	<b>Quink Voc Ens 4</b>	Etcetera (F) KTC1031 (5/86; 9/90)
<b>1988</b>	<b>The Sixteen</b> / Christophers 4, 5	Virgin Classics (S) 2 562013-2 (9/90 <sup>8</sup> ; 1/91 <sup>9</sup> )
<b>1989-91</b>	<b>Christ Church Cath Ch, Oxford</b> / Darlington 3, 4, 5	Nimbus (F) 3 NI5237 (12/90)/5287/5302 (oas); Regis (S) RRC1336; Portrait (S) PCL1008
<b>1991</b>	<b>Oxford Camerata</b> / Summerly 4, 5	Naxos (B) 8 550574 (7/93); (B) 8 553239
<b>1992</b>	<b>Th of Voices</b> / Hillier 4	ECM (F) 439 1722 (9/94)
<b>1995</b>	<b>Ch of New Coll Oxford</b> / Higginbottom 4	CRD (M) CRD3499 (7/96 <sup>8</sup> ; 11/03); (S) 5 CRD5008
<b>1995</b>	<b>Winchester Cath Ch</b> / Hill 5	Hyperion (B) CDH55348 (12/96 <sup>9</sup> )
<b>1999</b>	<b>The Cardinal's Musick</b> / Carwood 3, 4, 5	ASV (M) CDGAU206 (A/00)
<b>1999</b>	<b>Parthenia XVI</b> / Newman 3, 4, 5	Centaur (F) CRC2471
<b>2000</b>	<b>Pro Arte Sggs</b> / Hillier 3, 4, 5	Harmonia Mundi (B) HMA195 7223 (2/03 <sup>8</sup> )
<b>2003</b>	<b>Dunedin Consort 5</b>	Delphian (F) DCD34008 (A/03)
<b>2004</b>	<b>Phantasm 4</b>	Avie (F) AV2054 (6/05)
<b>2005</b>	<b>King's Singers 4</b>	Signum (F) SIGCD061; (S) 5 SIGCD120
<b>2005</b>	<b>Opera Polifonica</b> / Puccianti 4	Bongiovanni (M) D GB5629
<b>2009</b>	<b>Westminster Abbey Ch</b> / O'Donnell 5	Hyperion (F) CDA67770 (A/10)
<b>2011</b>	<b>Ch of Gonville &amp; Caius Coll, Cambridge</b> / Webber 5	Delphian (F) DCD34104 (A/12)
<b>2012</b>	<b>Stile Antico 5</b>	Harmonia Mundi (F) HMU80 7572 (9/13)
<b>2013</b>	<b>Collegium Vocale Gent</b> / Herreweghe 5	PHI (F) LPH014 (1/15)
<b>2013</b>	<b>New York Polyphony 4</b>	BIS (F) BIS2037 (12/13 <sup>8</sup> )
<b>2013</b>	<b>Vienna Voc Consort 5</b>	Rondeau (F) KL1401
<b>2013</b>	<b>Westminster Cath Ch</b> / Baker 3, 4, 5	Hyperion (F) CDA68038 (A/14)

Key: The figures in bold after the conductors' names indicate which of the Masses (three-, four- or five-voice) have been recorded

### EUROPEAN READING


#### Collegium Vocale Gent / Herreweghe

PHI (F) LPH014

The finest of the non-Anglophone readings in the current discography



offers a radically de-institutionalised Byrd, though as technically assured as anything emerging from the English choral tradition.

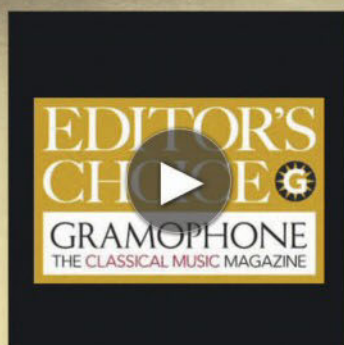


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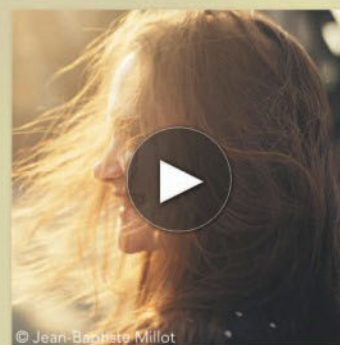


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'Forthright robustness': the choices of scoring in all three Masses from *The Cardinal's Musick*, under Andrew Carwood, show considerable independence

have a soprano on the top line of the five-voice Mass, but in the four-voice Mass they use a low scoring with the countertenor on top, so the two readings are contrasted in many ways.

Subsequent ensembles over the intervening years have struggled to match the Hilliards for clarity, poise or interpretative purpose, though Hillier himself came close in his re-reading of the four-voice Mass with **Theatre of Voices** a decade or so later. Interestingly, all but two of the remaining soloist recordings are of the four-voice Mass. The **Quink Vocal Ensemble** have a pleasingly clean and clear sound, but the Dutch ensemble's attractive timbre cannot compensate for the lack of rhetorical shaping, and the middle voices are noticeably unbalanced. In the five-voice Mass, the upper voices of the **Vienna Vocal Consort** are nicely acidulated, but again the charm soon wears off owing to the unyielding tactus. This suggests a certain self-consciousness, which is confirmed by the end, as intonation problems become positively distracting. More solid technically, with a confident, rounded tone but also strangely stiff, **New York Polyphony** (in the four-voice Mass) struggle with the architecture of the longer movements, or in finding local touches. No such technical insecurities attend the five-voice Mass from the **Dunedin Consort**, whose quicksilver account is bright and self-assured, although a little lacking in

traction. I suspect this impression has to do with the frankly distracting acoustic, which savours strongly of, shall we say, ceramic tiles. The sudden change of tempo at the 'Crucifixus' brings about a radical improvement, suggesting that a slower tempo (or, alternatively, another acoustic) would have done the singers more justice.

The final two recordings are wild cards, although it's surprising to discover that there's only one recording combining voices and instruments. The four-voice Mass from **The King's Singers** (here in cahoots with the viol consort Concordia) is something of a firebrand. Their forthrightness can be a tad unrelenting in the longer movements, though the judicious omission of the viols in some sections permits a certain variety.

**Phantasm** does the opposite, in effect, by omitting voices. The choice open to them was to treat the four-voice Mass either as a multi-movement fantasia or to let the meaning of the words guide the interpretation. Laurence Dreyfuss opts for the latter approach, taken almost to extremes in the third *Agnus Dei*, which is drawn out to a greater extent than a choir would attempt. By Phantasm's standards this is remarkably subdued, but it does demonstrate how well the Masses function as consort music.

So, in conclusion, those seeking a bigger sound will find they have plenty to choose

from among the recordings of both individual Masses and those of the complete set; of the latter, The Tallis Scholars will have its adherents even though it doesn't make my final cut. What I have sought to do in my top choices is represent the many different interpretations available – choirboys, soloists, and a combination of ensemble and soloists – all of which are characterful, contrasted and richly detailed in equal measure. Had the Hilliards' EMI recording been available, it would have undoubtedly made the final four. One can only hope that, before long, it is reissued under Warner's new branding. In any case, this doesn't affect my overall top choice, *The Cardinal's Musick* under Andrew Carwood – an incisive yet sensitive interpretation that hearkens back to those clandestine services of Byrd's time. ⑤

## TOP CHOICE

### **The Cardinal's Musick / Carwood**

ASV ⑧ CDGAU206

Combining the best of both worlds, this full-sounding ensemble also make judicious



use of first-rate soloists in reduced sections as they embrace the best of the English choral tradition while hinting at the historical Byrd – the stubborn recusant.

# PLAYLISTS

Explore music via our themed listening suggestions – and why not create your own too?

**T**he Gramophone Award-winning pianist Benjamin Grosvenor celebrates the piano's Golden Age, Jed Distler populates a musical zoo and Hugo Shirley responds to the rustlings of spring. Listen to the playlists at: [gramophone.co.uk/playlists](http://gramophone.co.uk/playlists)

## *Piano's Golden Age*

**A former Gramophone Young Artist, Benjamin Grosvenor offers a whirlwind tour of the piano-world's greats**

We're in a privileged position to have behind us such a long legacy of recordings of the piano repertoire. The first half of the 20th century is often referred to as a pianistic Golden Age, and we have on record evidence of the breadth and immensity of the talents of the time. It was an era of highly individual pianism, and each of the great artists had their own distinctive 'voice' at the keyboard. I've tried to put together a selection that demonstrates the range of musical personalities that existed during and emerged from this era.

Included is Hofmann's Chopin Ballade No 4 – highly emotive, explosively so at times. Also from Chopin, there is Friedman in a mazurka, a genre that seemed written in his veins – played with idiomatic rhythm and a natural elegance, Rachmaninov's account of the March from the Second Sonata (which contains a fascinating example of artistic liberty on the part of the interpreter in the repeat of the first section) and Moiseiwitsch's Scherzo No 1, played with wonderfully sculpted phrasing and great nobility. We hear the same artist in a larger work, a magnificent recording of the Schumann *Fantasie*, and Horowitz is represented in the Czerny *Ricordanza* Variations, a recording that is one of the finest representations of his pianistic finesse. Cortot is heard in an eloquent recording of one of his Bach transcriptions, and from the same composer there is a Prelude and Fugue by Samuel Feinberg – Bach playing that uses the full colouristic potential of the instrument. To conclude, there is Beethoven from Wilhelm Kempff, and inspired, whimsical playing from Cherkassky in Tchaikovsky's First Concerto – a bewitching pianistic display.

- **Chopin** Ballade No 4 in F minor  
Josef Hofmann *pf*



Benjamin Grosvenor offers a listening guide to the great pianists of the past

- La discothèque idéale de Diapason
- **Chopin** Mazurka No 17 in B flat minor, Op 24, No 4  
Ignaz Friedman *pf*  
Naxos Historical
  - **Chopin** Sonata No 2 – Marche Funèbre  
Sergei Rachmaninov *pf*  
RCA Gold Seal
  - **Chopin** Scherzo No 1 In B minor, Op 20  
Benno Moiseiwitsch *pf*  
Naxos Historical
  - **Schumann** Fantasie in C, Op 17  
Benno Moiseiwitsch *pf*  
Naxos Classical Archives
  - **Czerny** 'La Ricordanza' Variations, Op 33  
Vladimir Horowitz *pf*  
Hallmark
  - **Bach** (arr Cortot) Keyboard Concerto in F# minor, BWV1056 – Largo  
Alfred Cortot *pf*  
Naxos Historical
  - **Bach** Well-Tempered Clavier Book 1 – Prelude and Fugue No 24 in B minor, BWV869  
Samuel Feinberg *pf*  
Russian Compact Disc
  - **Beethoven** Piano Sonata No 4 – Largo, con gran espressione  
Wilhelm Kempff *pf*  
DG
  - **Tchaikovsky** Piano Concerto No 1 – Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso  
Shura Cherkassky *pf*  
Mangora Classical

## *A musical menagerie*

**Gramophone critic Jed Distler becomes zoo-keeper as he gathers together a collection of animals in music**

The relationship between composers and animals is a book-worthy topic. Borodin, for example, adored cats, while Brahms loathed them. Wagner doted on his dogs, while Elie-Miriam Delaborde had 121 parrots and cockatoos. Composers also project their affinity with animals through musical means. *Peter and the Wolf*, of course, remains the iconic musical menagerie, with *Carnival of the Animals* not far behind in popularity. However, two operas, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Where the Wild Things Are*, offer more complex creature interactions. A diversely populated barnyard helps comfort the newborn Jesus in John Rutter's Christmas classic *Donkey Carol*. The sliding string 'meows' in Leroy Anderson's *Waltzing Cat* are simple and sweet, while Paul Schoenfield's 'Dog's Heaven' (the fourth movement of his *Parables* for piano and orchestra) runs amok through seemingly every musical style in history, classical and popular alike. Telemann's *Frog Concerto* for violin and orchestra more or less conveys amphibious glottal scoops. Bartók's *Bear Dance* often gets assigned to advanced beginners, while Scriabin's



so-called *Mosquito Etude* requires an advanced pair of hands, to say the least. Lastly, Haydn's Symphony No 83 (*The Hen*) is the sanest and wittiest way to sidestep the bottomless pit of pieces written in tribute to our fine feathered friends.

- **Schoenfield** Parables for Piano and Orchestra – Dog's Heaven  
Andreas Boyd *pf* Dresden SO / Jonathan Nott  
Minerva/Athene
- **Knussen** Where the Wild Things Are  
London Sinfonietta / Oliver Knussen  
Arabesque
- **Janáček** The Cunning Little Vixen  
Soloists; VPO / Sir Charles Mackerras  
Decca
- **Haydn** Symphony No 83, 'The Hen'  
Heidelberg SO / Thomas Fey  
Hänssler Classics
- **Rutter** The Donkey Carol  
Choir and Orchestra of Clare College  
Cambridge / John Rutter  
Decca
- **Anderson** The Waltzing Cat  
Eastman-Rochester Pops Orchestra / Frederick Fennell  
Mercury
- **Telemann** Violin Concerto In A, 'The Frogs'  
Midori Sella *vn* Akademie für Alte Musik, Berlin  
Harmonia Mundi
- **Prokofiev** Peter and the Wolf  
David Bowie *narr* Philadelphia Orchestra / Eugene Ormandy  
RCA
- **Bartók** Bear Dance  
Andor Foldes *pf*

## BNF Collection

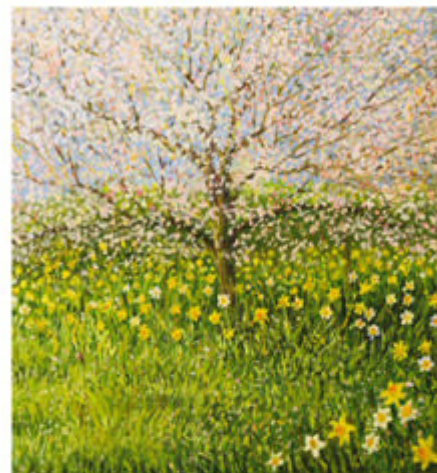
- **Scriabin** Etude in F sharp, Op 42 No 3 'Mosquito'  
Vladimir Horowitz *pf*  
Sony Classical

## Rustling into spring

Hugo Shirley suggests some seasonal listening as spring is sprung

Spring is nature's great inspiring force, its budding flowers and tottering infant creatures themselves potent metaphors for creativity and amorous stirrings. As such, music is awash with evocations of the season – literal portrayals of its sounds, poetic depictions of the feelings it inspires and mixtures of both. This list looks beyond the well-known rustles and rites, symphonies and sonatas to start with Frank Bridge's lovingly evocative 1927 Rhapsody *Enter Spring*. Few passages of music capture the sheer rustic joy of spring better than Simon's aria from Haydn's *The Seasons*, or its sensuous possibilities better than Siegmund's great lyrical outburst from Act 1 of *Die Walküre* – Wolf's 'Frühling übers Jahr', meanwhile, manages to capture a little bit of both.

Next come Ernest Bloch's *Hiver-Printemps*, Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song' (aka 'Camberwell Green', composed when South London was somewhat greener) and Tomasi's bracing, *Rite*-esque 'Danse des Oiseaux'. 'Spring' from *Les Vêpres siciliennes*'s ballet bursts with vernal exuberance, while Strauss and Massenet offer reflections on spring as a reminder of what's already been lost: 'Frühling' from the *Four Last Songs*, and Werther's



Spring: nature's great inspiring force

realisation, channeling Ossian, of his hopelessness in love.

- **Bridge** Enter Spring  
ASMF / Sir Neville Marriner  
Philips
- **Haydn** 'Schon eilet froh der Ackersmann'  
Florian Boesch *bar* Orchestre des Champs-Élysées / Philippe Herreweghe  
Phi
- **Wagner** 'Winterstürme wichen...'  
Jonas Kaufmann *ten* COE / Abbado  
Decca
- **Wolf** 'Frühling übers Jahr'  
Irmgard Seefried *mez* Erik Werba *pf*  
DG
- **Bloch** Hiver-Printemps  
St Petersburg State Cap SO/Tchernushenko  
Chandos
- **Verdi** 'Le Printemps'  
Met Orchestra / James Levine  
Sony Classical
- **Mendelssohn** 'Spring Song'  
Daniel Barenboim *pf*  
DG
- **Tomasi** 'Danse des Oiseaux'  
Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet  
BIS
- **Strauss** 'Frühling'  
Gundula Janowitz *sop* BPO / Karajan  
DG
- **Massenet** 'Pourquoi me reveiller'  
Georges Thill *ten* Paris Opera / Eli Cohen  
Naxos

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# PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducts Monteverdi's *Vespers* at Carnegie Hall, Semyon Bychkov in Paris and Madrid, Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* directed by Mike Leigh

## New York's Carnegie Hall & WQXR

**Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir bring the *Vespers* to New York, May 19**  
WQXR's Carnegie Hall Live series continues in impressive style with a live broadcast of Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* by the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, the Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists and Sir John Eliot Gardiner. It was with Monteverdi's *Vespers* that Gardiner launched the Monteverdi Choir at their inaugural concert in 1964 and he has since made two classic recordings of the work with them for Decca (in 1974) and Archiv (in 1989), so this should be an almost uniquely authoritative interpretation. The soloists include soprano Francesca Aspromonte, tenor Krystian Adam, baritone Robert Davies and bass Gianluca Buratto.  
[carnegiehall.org](http://carnegiehall.org); [wqxr.org](http://wqxr.org)

## Gothenburg Concert Hall & online

**Alexander Shelley conducts Walton and Sibelius symphonies, May 1**  
For the first day of May, a first and a last symphony: Alexander Shelley conducts the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra in Sir William Walton's First Symphony (from 1935) and Jean Sibelius's Symphony No 7 (from 1924). The concert will be streamed live by GSQplay and archived thereafter. While on the site (or the App), catch numerous other performances (including Barbara Hannigan both singing and conducting Rossini, Mozart and Luigi Nono – unforgettable!).  
[gsoplay.se](http://gsoplay.se)

## London's Wigmore Hall, BBC Radio 3 & online

**Four great chamber music concerts on Monday lunchtimes, May 4, 11, 18 & 25**  
The Wigmore Hall presents some enticing BBC Monday Lunchtime Concerts throughout May. In the first concert, the Elias Quartet are joined by Simon Crawford-Phillips (piano) for Schumann's Piano Quintet following a performance of Emily Howard's *Affarence* (May 4). The following week, the wonderful Italian contralto Sara Mingardo sings music from 16th- and 17th-century Italy, including Monteverdi's *Lamento d'Arianna*. Tenor Christoph Prégardien and pianist Daniel Heide perform songs by Schubert and Schumann (*Dichterliebe*) on May 18. And the Gramophone Award-winning pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet ends the month with music by Beethoven, Boulez, Ohana and Debussy (May 25).  
[wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://wigmore-hall.org.uk);  
[bbc.co.uk/radio3](http://bbc.co.uk/radio3)

## EVENT OF THE MONTH

Die Walküre at Vienna State Opera



**Vienna State Opera & streamed to your Smart TV or computer**

**Donizetti, Verdi and Wagner operas from Rattle and López-Cobos, May 8, 14, 30 & 31**  
Four operas will be transmitted from one of the world's great opera houses this month. On May 8, Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* is seen in a new production by Irina Brook with Michele Pertusi (Pasquale), Valentina Nafornitã (Norina), Juan Diego Flórez (Ernesto) and Alessio Arduini (Dr Malatesta). On May 14, the same conductor, Jesús López-Cobos, takes charge of Verdi's *Nabucco* with Plácido Domingo in the baritone title-role. Sir Simon Rattle launches Wagner's *Ring* cycle with *Das Rheingold* on May 30 and *Die Walküre* on May 31: the cast includes Michael Volle (Wotan), Tomasz Konieczny (Alberich), Christopher Ventris (Siegfried), Mikhail Petrenko (Hunding), Martina Serafin (Sieglinde) and Evelyn Herlitzius (Brünnhilde). The production is by Sven-Eric Bechtolf. Individual online tickets are €14.00.  
[staatsoperlive.com](http://staatsoperlive.com)

## London's Coliseum & cinemas

**The Pirates of Penzance, live from English National Opera in HD, May 19**  
ENO Screen, a partnership between English National Opera and Altive Media, was launched in 2013. The live cinema broadcasts that ENO Screen produce use multiple HD cameras to provide unusual angles and close-up views of the action on stage and in the orchestra pit. Following on from *La traviata* in March, Mike Leigh's new production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* (marking the film director's much-anticipated operatic debut) will be transmitted into cinemas around the UK on May 19. David Parry conducts, Alison Chitty is the designer and the role of Major-General Stanley is taken by Andrew Shore. Full of great melodies and

with a rapier-sharp libretto, *The Pirates of Penzance* will be broadcast live in over 400 cinemas in the UK and selected screens worldwide and seen by over 33,000 people in London, making it one of the most widely seen operas of the year.

[eno.org](http://eno.org)

## Berlin Philharmonie & Digital Concert Hall

**Jansons, Noseda, Haitink and Paavo Järvi lead the Berlin Philharmonic, May 10, 16, 24 & 30**  
Mariss Jansons conducts Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, Shostakovich's Second Violin Concerto (with Frank Peter Zimmermann) and Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* Suite No 2 (May 10). Paavo Järvi (see feature, page 16) conducts Schumann, Prokofiev (Piano Concerto No 2 with Yuja Wang) and Shostakovich (May 16). Gianandrea Noseda offers music by Petrassi, Richard Strauss (*Four Last Songs* with Angela Denoke) and Tchaikovsky on May 24. Bernard Haitink closes the month with Schubert's Symphony No 5 and Shostakovich's Symphony No 15. And during the month, the orchestra will vote for their new Music Director... Catch the concerts live or online: tickets for the Digital Concert Hall start at €9.90 for seven days' access.  
[digitalconcerthall.com](http://digitalconcerthall.com)

## Maison de la Radio, Paris & live on France Musique

**Semyon Bychkov conducts the Orchestre National de France, May 21**  
Music by Shostakovich (the Eighth Symphony), a composer with whom he has particular affinity, and Mozart feature on Semyon Bychkov's programme. He is joined by Alexandre Tharaud for Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 (K467) in the first half. Catch it live in Paris or tune in via the France Musique website.  
[maisondelaradio.fr](http://maisondelaradio.fr); [francemusique.fr](http://francemusique.fr)

## Auditorio Nacional de Música, Madrid & live on Radio Clásica

**Semyon Bychkov conducts the Orquesta Nacional de España, May 31**  
Another monumental concert from Semyon Bychkov, this time a performance of Mahler's Symphony No 6, the *Tragic*. The same programme is performed on May 29, 30 and 31, but it's the morning performance on Sunday 31 that's broadcast live on Radio Clásica; UK listeners can tune in at 10.30am GMT via Radio Clásica's website.  
[ocne.mcu.es](http://ocne.mcu.es); [rtve.es](http://rtve.es)

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—*The Clarinet Magazine*

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# HIGH FIDELITY

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This month a massive amplifier from a British brand but made in the USA, some very appealing headphones – and has the black box had its day?

**Andrew Everard,**  
Audio Editor

## MAY TEST DISCS



This recording from Reference Recordings of Bruckner's Fourth by the Pittsburgh SO has power, presence and beautifully captured detail.



Another fine recording from Norway's 2L label, combining Western choral and traditional Sami music in a glorious recorded acoustic. Magical!

## Streaming options, amplifiers – and a turntable

A network preamplifier, a compact integrated amp and the latest Pro-ject are among this month's offerings



**N**aim seems determined to offer network music playback to suit all tastes: it has component players, all-in-one systems and a while back launched its first network preamplifier, the NAC-N 172XS. Now Naim has unveiled a rather more ambitious network player/DAC/preamplifier, the NAC-N 272 **1**, starting from £3300 and for the first time in a Naim product offering DSD playback as well as high-resolution PCM-based audio.

Available with an optional DAB/DAB+/FM radio tuner module, which adds £295 to the price, the NAC-N 272 contains technology from Naim's flagship Statement amplifier system, as well as network and digital strategies derived from the company's ND- series of network players. The volume control is all-analogue, but controlled digitally, the digital-to-analogue conversion uses buffering and re-clocking to overcome any jitter in the incoming signal.

Six digital and three analogue inputs are provided, along with a USB connection for memory devices and iOS portables, and the NAC-N272 also offers Spotify Connect and Bluetooth wireless connectivity to computers, smartphones and tablets.

At the opposite end of the amplifier scale is the little PMA-50 **2** integrated

from Denon, now on sale at £399. Just 20cm wide, this all-digital amplifier delivers 50W per channel into 4ohms (25Wpc into 8ohms) and has two optical and one coaxial electrical digital-ins, plus a USB Type-B connection for use with a computer, through which it can handle PCM files up to 24-bit/192kHz as well as DSD2.8/5.6MHz. It also has Bluetooth wireless connectivity with NFC touch-pairing, and in addition to its speaker outputs has a 6.3mm headphone socket.

A rather more radical network streaming solution is a new desktop system, the AK500N **3** from Astell & Kern, the Korean company until now best-known for its upmarket portable digital players. It's an almost-cube, standing just over 24cm tall yet weighing almost 13kg, and combines CD ripping, internal SSD storage (from 1TB upwards), network client and server functions, and compatibility with all formats up to DSD5.6MHz. Indeed, it upconverts lower resolutions to DSD before the digital-to-analogue conversion, which is just one of the many menu options on the flip-up display screen atop the cube.

It's also battery powered, the internal power source keeping mains noise away from the audio circuitry as well as accounting for a substantial chunk of that

weight, and it's yours for a not insignificant £8999. The company will be expanding the system in the near future with a matching power amplifier and power supply, and I hope to review the entire set-up just as soon as it's complete.

Tannoy has used its Dual Concentric driver, in which the treble unit sits at the centre of the mid/bass cone, for almost 70 years, and in the new Revolution XT speaker range **4**, the driver appears with a new Omnimagnet motor and Torus Ogive Waveguide, this using a doughnut-shaped high-frequency diaphragm with a bullet-shaped phase-plug. The new design allows the high frequency unit to be moved forward and yet still remain physically time-aligned to the LF cone, improving high frequency directivity. Using the Revolution series trapezoidal cabinet design, the XT range starts with the XT6 bookshelf model at £599 a pair, and extends to the floorstanding XT6F and XT8F, at £999/pr and £1299/pr respectively.

Finally this month, a new addition to the highly successful Pro-ject range, the 2Xperience SB **5**, which sells for £1050 complete with arm and cartridge. Retained from the previous 2Xperience model is the range of real-wood finishes on the plinth, and the vinyl-topped platter, but the new version comes with a new motor complete with speed selector, the company's 9CC Evolution arm, with its carbon-fibre tube, and a preinstalled custom Ortofon 2M Silver cartridge. Based on the 2M Red, this Pro-ject-exclusive version has silver windings in the generator system.

The 2Xperience comes complete with acrylic dust-cover, a record clamp and coned feet. **6**

## ● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

# Arcam A49

Designed in the UK, built in the USA, this is the most ambitious amplifier yet from the Arcam stable, and with seemingly unlimited reserves of power it's also its best



### ARCAM A49

**Type** Integrated amplifier

**Price** £3750

**Inputs** Moving magnet phono, six line-in, one set of assignable balanced XLR

**Outputs** Tape out, preamp-level outputs on phono and XLRs, 2 prs speakers, headphones

**Other connections** 12V trigger, power output for Arcam rSeries products

**AV/Home cinema bypass** Yes, assignable

**Power** 200Wpc into 8ohms, 400Wpc max into 4ohms

**Accessories supplied**

Remote handset cables for 12v trigger and rSeries power

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 43.3x17.1x42.5cm  
[arcam.co.uk](http://arcam.co.uk)

to connect your computer or iPhone or whatever.

It's still designed in the UK, although Arcam HQ today is rather more of a design and engineering facility, the old factory – complete with the beloved milk-float used to ferry goods around the site – having been consigned to history. The current offices are just across the road from the former site, but you'll still usually find Arcam co-founder John Dawson hunched over a workbench designing and tweaking products under development. Arcam's products are now made elsewhere, in the case of the A49 amplifier at the Rochester, New York, manufacturing facility of JAM Industries, of which Arcam became a wholly-owned subsidiary back in 2012.

So the A49 is basically a simple amplifier writ large, then? Not quite, although its input and output options are fairly conventional, comprising a moving magnet phono stage, six sets of line-ins on RCA sockets and one on balanced XLRs, one set of analogue outs for recording, preouts for future expansion on RCAs and XLRs, and two sets of speaker outputs on substantial combination terminals.

But what sets this amplifier apart is its power output, and the manner in which it's achieved: the A49 will deliver 200Wpc into 8ohms, and a maximum of 400W into 4ohms, and yet its Class G power amplifier design enables it to give its first 50W of output in Class A mode for maximum signal purity. Arcam describes it thus: 'Class G implements multiple power supplies rather than just a single supply. If a

Arcam's big, powerful A49 amplifier, which sells for £3750, may come as something of a jolt for those of us old enough to have pressed their noses up against the window of a hi-fi shop, gazing longingly at the then-new A&R (Cambridge) A60 amplifier, all 30W per channel of it and complete with an optional teak cover. Yours for around £130, the equivalent of just over £900 in modern terms, it stood out from a market brimming with button-bedecked imported amplifiers, was designed and built in Britain, and best

of all sounded really rather wonderful, if memory serves.

Fast-forward the better part of 40 years, and we have the A49, which would tower over the A60, both in terms of stature and power output: it stands a bit over 17cm tall, weighs a smidge under 20kg, and is remarkably untroubled by the trappings of so many modern integrated amplifiers. For example there's no sign of digital inputs or Bluetooth wireless connectivity, although the A49 does have a power output for one of Arcam's add-on digital-to-analogue converters, should you wish

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## SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Arcam A49 is a superb amplifier – here are some system-building suggestions for you

### ARCAM IRDAC

To add digital inputs to the A49, the obvious partner is Arcam's £399 irDAC. Powered from the amplifier, it will allow the connection of a computer through USB, plus additional digital sources



### BOWERS & WILKINS CM8 S2

With the prodigious power of the A49, speakers are needed which are able to thrive when driven well. The £1499 Bowers & Wilkins CM8 S2 floorstanders are well suited to the way this amp plays music



dynamic signal is received that goes beyond the capability of this first power supply, the secondary supply is gradually brought in up to full rated power output as required.

'The first power supply is of lower power and within this region we run in pure Class A, which has no crossover distortion. As the secondary supply is only used when required, extreme levels of power are possible because very little energy is wasted in the amplifier as heat when it is not being used.'

The A49 is designed with plenty of flexibility built-in: it's possible to adjust the balance and display dimming, as well as the usual volume and input selection, from the remote handset, while a press on the remote's 'menu' button allows you to assign the XLR inputs to whichever source button you want. You can also set one or more inputs as a fixed level (for example when using the amplifier with the front left/right channel pre-outs of an AV receiver) and adjust that level; and even convert the phono input into another line-in if you don't have a turntable. And all without leaving your seat!

## PERFORMANCE

After heaving the monster into place, I left it powered up for a few days before reviewing, and used it for my day-to-day listening while auditioning some music releases, so by the time I came to the testing proper I was already pretty aware of what it could do when connected between my Naim NDS/555PS and PMC OB1 speakers.

In an old review of the original A&R (Cambridge) A60 amplifier, it's described as 'an amplifier that is equally suited to all types of taste, possessing transient attack and an aggressive nature when required, and a silkiness and openness as is needed for gentler passages', and that – albeit on the grand scale – sums up the A49 rather well.

I have to say that I haven't been a great fan of some Arcam amplifiers of the past, finding them to be just a little smooth and relaxing for total involvement (I think that's the polite version!), but I have no such qualms about this new flagship model: while retaining a cultured, controlled sound when required, this is an amplifier truly able to let rip if the music needs it to.

With the piano and orchestral textures of Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* (with pianist John Nakamatsu and the Rochester Philharmonic conducted by Christopher Seaman on Harmonia Mundi), the Arcam shows its light touch with the solo instrument, plus the speed and definition, not to mention its sheer power, when it comes to delivering the impact of the orchestra. This is truly one of those amplifiers you could describe as delivering the music without restraint. I'm pretty confident that however ambitious a Wagnerian you may be, you're never going to get anywhere near exploring the limits of the A49, even with the most demanding speakers.

*'An overall presentation that's both fast and dynamic while still able to reveal even the subtlest detail of a recording'*

But all this power isn't just deployed in the cause of the maximum possible volume level, even though the Arcam will go very loud indeed, and do so completely cleanly: instead it contributes to an overall presentation that's both fast and dynamic while still able to reveal even the subtlest detail of a recording, and present a soundstage picture with focus, depth and an entirely natural sense of presence.

Playing the dramatic opening of Tom Winpenny's 'Le Poisson Magique' set of organ works by John McCabe (on Resonus), it's hard not to be impressed by the way the Arcam delivers the first great chords on the St Albans Cathedral organ, but even more striking is the way it places the instrument in a real, resonant space, thanks in no small part to the excellent recording, especially striking in 24-bit/96kHz.

The recent Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra recording of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony, conducted by Manfred Honeck (on Reference Recordings), is also given a treatment with real presence and space around the musicians, and this is something readily apparent via the Arcam, thanks to that combination of muscle and finesse. The amplifier even impresses when its

Or you could try...



### Naim Supernait 2

At its £3750 price level, the Arcam is in a pretty rarified sector of the integrated amplifier market, but it's not without competition. An obvious rival is Naim's £2750 Supernait 2, offering somewhat less power on paper than the Arcam – 80W per channel plays 200W – but still having a comprehensive range of features within its slimline casework, including AV passthrough and the ability to be upgraded using one of Naim's external power supplies.

[naimaudio.com](http://naimaudio.com)



### Yamaha A-S2100

If you want a similarly impressive amplifier but the budget is a little tighter, Yamaha's beautifully-built A-S2100 will fit the bill at around £1700. It delivers 160W into 4ohms, has both balanced and single-ended inputs, and features high-quality phono and headphone stages. It also happens to look gorgeous.

[uk.yamaha.com](http://uk.yamaha.com)

phono input is used, as was confirmed with the fine Linn Records set of the *Gramophone* Award-winning Dunedin Consort *Messiah* on LP.

In summary, this is by any standards a very fine amplifier, whether or not you've been hankering for some more power for your system: most of the time it's rather less of a brute than it may at first appear, but then when the music demands, it can unleash its considerable firepower. That's what makes it such an appealing listen. **G**

## REVIEW MUSICAL FIDELITY MF-200

# Headphones that command your attention

Superb headphones from a British company best known for its hi-fi electronics

As I've noted previously in these pages, there's been an explosion of models and brands in the headphone market. Largely driven by the popularity of various smartphones and tablets, products have been popping up left, right and centre to feed a market expected to have reached just short of \$10bn (£6.5bn) last year, and predicted to rise to \$11.3bn (£7.4bn) in 2017 and 2018, with sales of almost 360m units.

Not only that, but the provider of these figures, UK-based analyst Futuresource, says that people are buying multiple pairs of headphones for use in various applications, so in the US and Europe average ownership is between three and four pairs. Indeed, a whole 'head-fi' sector has sprung up, with some enthusiasts keeping that average up with a lot more than four pairs of headphones, plus various accessories including headphone amplifiers and the like.

British-based Musical Fidelity is no stranger to the headphone market, having launched its X-CANS headphone amplifier the better part of 20 years ago, but it's only recently that it's moved into making and selling headphones, with the EB-50 in-ear model appearing in 2012, and more recently the EB-33 and the MF-100, its first on-ear model. Now it's added the MF-200 on-ear model, selling for £229 and very much in the heart of the fast-growing 'premium' headphones market. Designed to improve on the design of the existing MF-100, principally through the use of a redesigned enclosure using more inert materials and better, pair-matched drivers, the MF-200 is of a somewhat unusual design: it's basically a closed-back model, with the benefits of excluding external sound, but has a number of fine vents in order to bring some of the 'airiness' of open-backed construction.

The drivers themselves use 41mm diaphragms punched from a single sheet of material to ensure even thickness, neodymium magnets, and shallow voice-coils with extra-fine windings to improve efficiency. The whole thing is then wrapped in a luxurious (and slightly retro) package, with a polished finish to the metal hangers and swivels, and a choice of real leather or Alcantara 'suede' for the ear-cushions.

### PERFORMANCE

The MF headphones feel substantial without being heavy. It's easy to get a good fit without feeling the head is being weighed down or clamped in a vice, and they never become uncomfortable even after extended listening.

A neat touch is the clear colour-coding of the earpieces, which will save those of a certain age (ie me!) looking for their reading glasses to work out which side is which, and the headphones come with a 3.5mm stereo plug fitted, plus a 6.3mm adapter, allowing them to be used with portable devices and full-size audio components. An inline microphone/mute control is provided on the cable, allowing the MF-200 to be used for smartphone calling.

These headphones are easy to drive, with 99dB sensitivity and 64 ohm impedance, and all the computers, smartphones and tablets with which I tried them were able to get them as loud as I could ever want without any signs of distress.

However, I also tried them with a battery of headphone amplifiers, from the very good one built into the Naim Supernait 2 to my Trends Audio PA-10 valve amp, and the Denon DA-10 portable and Marantz HD-DAC1 reviewed in these pages recently. In each case the MF headphones were able to reveal the characteristics of the amplifier/device with which they were used, while at the same time being both informative and a hugely enjoyable listen.

What's more, the unusual enclosure design works well, in that there's good isolation from outside noise and hardly any leakage from the headphones outwards. At the same time there's a sense of openness about the sound rather than that feeling of being 'shut in' sometimes present with conventional closed-back designs.

Without sacrificing any treble detail they consistently sound sweet and smooth, while the weighty bass and well-judged midband ensure music always sounds substantial and yet highly intelligible. There's none of that effort sometimes required to work out exactly what's being sung or to follow a specific instrument in an ensemble, but neither are these headphones in any way mechanical or over-analytical: instead they strike just the right balance between information and musical enjoyment.

I've had a chance to play a wide range of music through the MF-200s, from



### SPECIFICATION

#### MUSICAL FIDELITY MF-200

**Type** Closed-back headphones

**Price** £229

**Impedance** 64 ohm +/-10%

**Sensitivity** 99dB +/-3dB

**Rated/maximum input power** 10mW/30mW

**Frequency response** 20Hz-20kHz

**Cable** 1.3m, with inline microphone/mute button and 3.5mm plug

**Accessories supplied** 6.3mm plug adapter, leather and Alcantara ear-cushions, carrying bag

**Dimensions** (WxHxD) 20x19x8.5cm

**Weight** 245g (approx)

**musicalfidelity.com**

Dame Ann Murray's beautiful set of Brahms and Schumann Lieder (Linn, 3/15) through to the Qobuz download of Gustavo Dudamel's Wagner album with the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela. The headphones are as adept with the gentle Lieder as they are with the orchestral *Sturm und Drang* of the Wagner, and in each case the performances have a realism and an insight to command the attention.

Yes, these headphones sound good when connected to a phone or tablet and are light and portable enough to carry around with you, but they deliver music with even greater conviction when powered by a bit more amplifier muscle and formed a fine partnership with the Marantz DAC/amp. I guess that makes them a pretty good all-round choice, then. **G**



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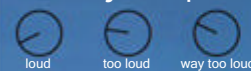
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## ● ESSAY

# Could it be time to break out of the box?

New technology signals a move away from 'conventional' hi-fi separates

For as long as I can remember, hi-fi components have been something around 43cm wide, and rectangular boxes. They may have been taller, or shallower, or heavier, than the norm, but that aside there's been little in the appearance to distinguish the humblest £100 amplifier from one twice the price.

They're black – or if you're so inclined, silver or goldish – boxes, usually with a number of buttons and a volume control, or a CD drawer, perhaps with a display to show what they're doing, and that's about it. Most 'proper' hi-fi still comes in what an acquaintance of mine pithily summed up as 'boring black boxes'.

But there are signs things are changing, and manufacturers are waking up to the fact there's a whole new world of industrial design out there, until recently only tapped by relatively few brands (remember the strikingly original Meridian MCA of the early 1980s, a modular amplifier, which slotted together like a number of building blocks to create the configuration the user required?).

I was reminded of that kind of 'out of the box' thinking when I first encountered the Astell & Kern AK500N a month or two back: as mentioned in News this month, it's a CD ripper, storage and playback solution, able to operate both as a server for a home music network and a player for music stored elsewhere, controlled by a flip-up touchscreen and powered by an internal battery to keep noise out of the audio chain.

This isn't a micro-system, but a piece of hi-fi hardware of very serious intent, and yet it's packaged in a near-cube around 24cm on each side, fitted with an integral



Astell & Kern's AK500N: a striking design 'symbolizing the greatness of the Matterhorn'

stand (which you can remove if you want, using a tool supplied) and is both almost devoid of any conventional controls and fronted by a strangely asymmetric sculptural panel housing no more than a power light and the slot into which CDs are fed for ripping.

The styling, we are told, 'features multiple facets coming together in a single point, symbolizing the greatness of Switzerland's Matterhorn, ever-changing with time and the amount of light. The changes in the surfaces...represent the highs, mids, and lows in sound.'

Now, you may have just thought 'Hmmm...', but what's more striking when you look inside the AK500N is that there's a lot of space in that cube, despite the need to accommodate a hefty battery and up to four 1TB SSDs. Frankly, I suspect that if

they'd been free of the need to build the unit around a conventional CD drive and that 7in display panel on the top, the A&K designers could have made the AK500N just about any shape they wanted: as it is, they took what they had to include, came up with a design philosophy and ran with it.

The '43cm or thereabouts' convention harks back to the standard 19in industrial rack – some products still come with optional mounts for installation in these racks, usually found in studios, the 'machine room' of custom installations, and in telecoms and computing applications – which is based on a standard first formalized in the 1930s for relays and telephone equipment.

Somehow it has just stuck in hi-fi, but just as other industries have moved on, so at last some audio designers seem to be thinking beyond 43cm wide boxes. Denon, for example, has followed the lead of its DA-300USB DAC and created the PMA-50 amplifier (also in News this month), not only compact but also able to be used in vertical orientation to further reduce the space it occupies, and of course there's also the reinvention of NAD's classic 3020 amplifier as the D3020, asymmetric of design and with a single prominent control mounted on one rounded-off corner.

If, as many predict, the age of physical media is coming to an end – though I'm not sure about that one just yet – it's to be hoped that designers will grab the opportunities that brings and come up with new and adventurous designs to tempt more buyers either into, or back into, hi-fi, rather than allowing their thinking to be constrained by conventions rooted in the 1930s. **G**

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## A du Pré postscript

I'd like to offer a little postscript to Sarah Kirkup's piece on Jacqueline du Pré (February, page 10). Some years ago I was asked to review a masterclass by du Pré who was already confined to a wheelchair and unable to play. I was astonished and delighted to find her full of verbal felicity so that a rather dull English cellist really started to blossom in the Brahms E minor Sonata. I wrote about this and a copy of the magazine (the long defunct *International Music and Musicians*) was picked up at an airport by Daniel Barenboim who read my piece and sent a copy to his wife. She then wrote to me (I still have her letter) saying that since music was her life, life appeared to have ended but that my piece restored a sense of stability and at any rate some measure of happiness. She then wrote in the *Radio Times* that when she felt down she took my article out of her handbag and it made her feel useful again.

Bryce Morrison  
London W1

## Richter gold

I always enjoy Rob Cowan's monthly 'Replay' articles and as an avid lifelong Sviatoslav Richter fan I was particularly interested in his comments on the newly released Sony Classical collection (March, page 94) and the recent Decca set which contains his Decca, Philips and DG recordings (April, page 118). However, he states that those who have bought the Sony collection 'will have to invest' in the Decca one and that 'if it's a matter of choosing', then the Decca set should be the first port of call. This is surely mistaken.

It is true that there are 51 CDs in the Decca set whereas the Sony collection houses just 18. However, most Richter devotees like myself will have most if not all the Decca/Philips/DG ones since these are the major companies for which the pianists recorded throughout his career.

So what's so special about the 18-disc Sony set? Simply that nine of the CDs cover the series of six recitals given by Richter in October 1960 in Carnegie Hall. These were recorded but permission for them to be issued was rapidly refused by the pianist and only a limited number of LPs were issued. They commanded

## Letter of the Month



Sir Charles Groves – a gentle and unassuming conductor

## Conductors without ego

David Robertson's tribute to the self-effacement and humility of his friend Pierre Boulez (April, page 16) reminds me of a comment made by the late Sir Neville Cardus. During his long career as a music reviewer, Cardus had observed and met many conductors, but he considered that only two were entirely lacking in vanity: Otto Klemperer and Pierre Boulez. Cardus also observed that their humility and self-abnegation in the service of the music they conducted did not exclude a strong sense of their own self-worth or the possession of very strong opinions.

I would mention another conductor in this context: Sir Charles Groves.

He was not only a very fine conductor, but also a gentle and unassuming man who saw himself primarily as the servant of the music he conducted. He was a great lover of Cornwall (where I think he had a home) and I had the privilege of meeting him on several occasions when he dropped into what was then my local pub in the village of Paul near Penzance.

He is buried in a simple grave in the lovely little burial ground at St Levan Church near Porthcurno in Cornwall. His headstone identifies him only as 'Charles Groves – Musician'.

Keith Pearce  
Penzance, Cornwall

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astronomical prices in the market and few collectors could get hold of them. The only previous attempt to transfer these to CD was made recently by Doremi but the transfers from LP were poor. Sony has now used the original tapes and the result is a revelation. I never expected to

hear these recitals in my lifetime and the experience has been thrilling, perhaps the most exciting Richter issue in years. This is the set that for Richter enthusiasts will be the first port of call.

Tony Williams  
Blanford, Glasgow



## Brahms via Schumann?

I read, in Philip Clark's article (March, page 16) on the four conductors who have vastly different (and interesting) views of the four Schumann symphonies, that Robin Ticciati, who has the most original approach of all, hopes in the future to find his way to Brahms through Schumann. I am writing this because I am certain (rare for me) that this approach cannot succeed. Brahms was a through-and-through Classicist and Schumann was totally a Romanticist. Nowhere in Brahms's orchestral works do you hear the kind of thematic translation that Schumann was finding and developing. Schumann, at that time, was unique in how he was conceiving his music.

Maybe Robin Ticciati has a valid point in his quest for light textures. Neither Schumann nor Brahms are played today with light textures. And yet Brahms often seemed to be looking for light, direct textures in performances of his music. Lest we forget, the beginning of that very 'heavy' Symphony No 1 is not *forte* or *fortissimo* but *mezzo forte*. And the middle of the third movement of the same symphony is never played lightly enough to reveal the intended texture. What we almost always hear today is tradition, not what Brahms intended.

Ben Cutler, via email

## Over easy?

I much enjoyed David Vickers and Lindsay Kemp's reconsideration of Hogwood's *Messiah* (April, page 122). I'm a proud owner of the original LPs bought in May 1980 and as a postscript I would like to draw attention to the delightful title on the record label for No 21 (on Side 3): 'His yolk easy, and his burthen is light'.

Jonathan Newcombe Clayton  
West Huddersfield

## Editorial notes

In his March 'Collection' (page 102) on Carl Nielsen's Third Symphony, David Patrick Stearns refers to Erik Tuxen's recording as having been made in 1949 (Naxos's remastering claims 1952): according to the Nationaldiskoteket (and the booklet of a previous Dutton transfer), was made between October 25 and 30, 1946. Our thanks to GP Gennaro for pointing this out.

In the April 'Replay' (page 118) Rob Cowan referred to Beethoven's E flat Sonata as Op 10 No 3 instead of Op 31 No 3.

# OBITUARIES

A prodigious pianist-composer, a pianist who was a fixture at the Proms, a contralto and bass-baritone who died in the same plane crash

## RONALD STEVENSON

*Composer and pianist*  
*Born March 6, 1928*  
*Died March 28, 2015*



Ronald Stevenson, who is best known for his vast *Passacaglia on DSCH* (at 80 minutes one of the longest single-movement works for the

piano in existence), has died at the age of 87. A musician in the great tradition of pianist-composers, Stevenson attracted a loyal following, drawn to his individual musical voice and his craggy and challenging writing.

Born in Lancashire, Stevenson studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and then, for six months, at Rome's Santa Cecilia Academy. He then embarked on a career of composition, performance, writing and a number of stints teaching.

As a composer he was prodigious, his output including two piano concertos, a Violin Concerto (commissioned by Menuhin), a Cello Concerto (in memoriam Jacqueline du Pré), choral music and chamber music but the largest share went to solo piano music and songs (well over 200, including 10 song-cycles). His *Passacaglia on DSCH*, based on a seven-bar ground built from Shostakovich's initials (D, E flat, C, B) occupied him for two years, from 1960, and has received several recordings (including two played by Stevenson himself on APR and Altarus, as well as the premiere commercial one from John Ogdon for HMV, and one from Raymond Clarke on Marco Polo). He also made numerous transcriptions turning, *inter alia*, the *Adagio* of Mahler's Tenth Symphony and Eugene Ysaÿe's six solo violin sonatas into piano sonatas.

As a pianist he championed composers who had a similar aesthetic to his own – Busoni was a particular favourite, and he was also generous in his advocacy of his contemporaries, Havergal Brian, John Foulds and Bernard Stevens among them.

As a writer he frequently contributed to *The Listener*, and his correspondence with Percy Grainger (whose music he championed) is fascinating (Toccata Press

published a collection in 2010). Toccata Press also published a symposium on Stevenson's music in 2005.

## PETER KATIN

*Pianist*  
*Born November 14, 1930*  
*Died March 19, 2015*



The pianist Peter Katin has died: he was 84. A much-admired musician, Katin's career was characterised by long periods of neglect, followed by periods of

great productivity. Born in London to an immigrant Orthodox Jewish father from Lithuania and an English mother, Katin showed early musical promise and attended the Royal Academy of Music from the age of 12; he was also head chorister at Westminster Abbey. He made his Wigmore Hall debut aged 18 and was soon a sought-after soloist and chamber music-partner. He made his debut at the Proms in 1953, a personal triumph. As Katin said in an interview with *Gramophone* in October 1987, 'I remember early in my career playing Rachmaninov's Third Concerto at the Proms, and it brought the house down; since then I've hardly ever been asked to play anything else. Bang went Beethoven, Mozart, chamber music... I put up with this for a long time, and then I took a stand and said I wasn't going to play these things again. That gave me time to study other composers properly and it's paid off.'

During the late 1950s Katin made a number of recordings for Decca and Westminster including *concertante* works by Mendelssohn, a couple of Liszt recitals, Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto and *Concert Fantasia*, Rachmaninov's First and Second Piano Concertos and Litolf's *Concerto Symphonique* (all now available from Pristine Classical in superb remasterings). He continued to explore the Romantic piano repertoire and was a frequent fixture at the Proms (he had made 25 appearances by the 1970s). He also appeared as the musical partner of the violinist Alfredo Campoli (in the 1950s) and the soprano Victoria de los Angeles (in the 1970s).

Katin taught at the University of Western Ontario in Canada for a while before returning to the UK in 1984. The major engagements had dried up but Katin persevered, performing at music clubs and teaching, as well as making a number of self-funded recordings. In 1987 he embarked on a series of CDs for Olympia and drew complimentary reviews: Joan Chissell wrote of Katin's Chopin B minor Piano Sonata that 'at the piano he nevertheless keeps emotion under strict control in a performance of exemplary clarity and rhythmic control' and James Methuen-Campbell wrote (of a Liszt recital) that 'one cannot question Peter Katin's depth as a Liszt-player. In the more quiet and thoughtful pieces recorded here he is very much in his element. From the first few notes of the opening *Consolation* I was enchanted by the expressive air of reflection, which is so entirely in tune with the title of the pieces. His pure, self-effacing and sincere approach ensures that the familiar Third *Consolation*, in D flat, is free from that saccharine pallor in which it is so often cloaked.' Katin retired from performance in 2004.

## MARIA RADNER

*Contralto*  
Born January 1, 1981  
Died March 24, 2015



Contralto Maria Radner was on board the Germanwings flight 4U9525 from Barcelona to Düsseldorf, which came down in the

French Alps. She had been performing in *Siegfried* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu and was returning home to the German city. Although only in her mid-30s, Radner had established herself as an important artist in a remarkably short time, and was in great demand for Wagnerian roles in particular. She made her Royal Opera debut in 2012 as Erda, where she made a strong impression not only for the smooth richness of her voice – a true contralto that would surely only have grown in authority and power – but also for an unusually imposing and glamorous stage presence. Her portrayal is preserved on disc in Pentatone's 2013 recording of *Das Rheingold* with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra under Marek Janowski.

Radner's Met debut, also in 2012, was as the First Norn in *Götterdämmerung*, in

which role, alternating with Flosshilde, she had been due to make her Bayreuth debut this summer. She sang Anna in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at La Scala under Pappano, and was due to appear in the same opera in Buenos Aires later this season. The music of Mahler dominated her wide concert repertoire; she can be heard on Oehms Classics' Cologne recording of the Eighth Symphony, with the Gürzenich Orchestra under Markus Stenz. Born and educated in Düsseldorf, Radner was accompanied on the flight by her husband and baby.

## OLEG BRYJAK

*Bass-baritone*  
Born October 27, 1960  
Died March 24, 2015



Like Maria Radner (above), Oleg Bryjak had been performing in *Siegfried* in Barcelona and was a passenger on

the Germanwings flight that crashed en route to Düsseldorf.

Bryjak had since 1996 been a member of the ensemble at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein in Düsseldorf. In a statement on the company's website, the Intendant Christoph Meyer said: 'We have lost in Oleg Bryjak a wonderful artist and human being. We are shocked.' Born in Kazakhstan in 1960, Bryjak performed in the USSR before winning the Sylvia Getsy Competition in Stuttgart in 1990. He was engaged at the Badisches Staatstheater in Karlsruhe before the move to Düsseldorf. His repertoire covered many of the greatest comic and tragic bass-baritone roles.

Bryjak was a regular guest at several of the world's most important opera houses. He was particularly in demand as Alberich, which he recorded while in Karlsruhe (the live *Ring* conducted by Günter Neuhold, now available on Documents) and sang in Vienna, Chicago, with the Berlin Staatsoper on tour in Japan under Barenboim and with the Orchestra of the Age Enlightenment under Rattle at the BBC Proms. He brought to his portrayal an imposing and natural acting ability as well as incisive, sharply focused vocalism and dark humour, characteristics which are also preserved in his performance as Dikoj in *Kát'a Kabanova*, captured on Fra Musica's DVD of Robert Carsen's production.

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## Tristan und Isolde

150 years since its premiere, Hugo Shirley explores the ways in which Wagner's opera changed perceptions of the art form – and recommends some of the recordings to hear.

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Haydn. Kaipainen. Tomasi Tpt Concs. *Pirinen/Tampere PO/Lintu.* ⑆ **ABCD369**

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Various Cpsrs Hpd Wks. *Brouwer, J.* ⑆ **ACDBR0762**

Various Cpsrs Out of Bounds – Bass Tbn Wks. *Eversden/*

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Telemann Ovs & Concs for Darmstadt. *Valova/Ambassadeurs/Kossenko.* ⑆ **ALPHA200**

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Harvey, R Plague & the Moonflowers. *Various chs/Higginbottom/Corp.* ⑆ **ALU0001**

Vivaldi Rec Concs. *Harvey/London Vivaldi Orch.* ⑆ **ALU0002**

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Various Cpsrs Tpt Concs. *Leleu/Orch d'Auvergne/Veses.* ⑆ **API03**

**APR** *aprrcordings.co.uk*

Various Cpsrs Cpte Columbia Recs (r1936-39). *Kitain.* ② ④ **APR6017**

Various Cpsrs Live Recs from the Univ of Illinois (pp1949). *Hess.* ③ ④ **APR7306**

**ARCAN** *outhere-music.com/en/labels/arcana*

Bach, JS Musikalisches Opfer. *Ens Aurora/Gatti.* ⑆ **A384**

Bach, JS Solo Vc Stes. Va da gamba Sons. *Kuijken, W & P.* ② ③ **A383**

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Dowland Awake Sweet Love. *Munderloh/Behr.* ⑆ ④ **ARS38 169**

Ives. Mozart. Verdi Stg Qts. *Schumann Qt.* ⑆ ④ **ARS38 156**

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Various Cpsrs Ghosts & Mirrors – Pf Wks. *Uttley.* ⑆ **ARCO1002**

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Rachmaninov Songs. *Dodoka/Shelley.* ⑆ **ACD106**

Ritchie Sym No 4. *Christchurch SO/Woods.* ⑆ **ACD314**

Whitehead Alice. *NZSO/Taddei.* ⑆ **ACD613**

Various Cpsrs Ake, aka, kia kaha e!: Songs of the New Zealand

28 (Māori) Battalion. 28 (Māori) Battalion. ④ ② **ACD206**

Various Cpsrs Mirage – Hp Wks. *Mills.* ⑆ **ACD602**

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Various Cpsrs RIAS Recs, Vol 4: Modernism (r1950-56).

*Amadeus Qt.* ② ④ **AUDITE21 429**

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*Band.* ⑆ **AV2321**

Enescu. Prokofiev. Shostakovich Vc Sons. *Buruiana/Siloea.* ⑆ **AV2302**

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Various Cpsrs Samba! – Brazilian Wks for Gtr Duo. *Eden Stell.* ⑆ **BGS123**

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Crumb, D Red Desert. *Gearhart/Hamm/Simas/Vacchi/Barone/Ponto.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9450**

Lansky Contemplating Weather. *Various artists.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9447**

**BRILLIANT CLASSICS** *brilliantclassics.com*

d'Albert Tiefland (r1963). *Staatskapelle Dresden/Schmitz.* ② ② **95114**

Antico. Cavazzoni Renaissance Kybd. *Falcone.* ② **95007**

Bach, JS Orch Stes. *Virtuosi Saxoniae/Güttler.* ② **95018**

Bosgraaf. Boulez. Tamminga Dialogues – Wks for Rec & Elecs.

*Bosgraaf/Tamminga.* ② **94842**

Brahms Serenades Nos 1 & 2. Ovs. Haydn Vars. *Various artists.* ② ② **95073**

Chopin Cpte Edn. *Various artists.* ② ⑦ **94660**

Cirri Org Sons, Op 1. *Gabba.* ② **94951**

Galuppi Cpte Stg Concs. *Ens StilModerno.* ② **94648**

Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue. American in Paris. *Siegel/St Louis SO/Slatkin.* ② ② **94861**

Karg-Elert Cpte Wks for Fl. *Ligas/Marroni.* ② **94976**

Krogseth Viking Conc Mirto Norwegian Memories. *Mirto/Florence Stg Ens/Vismara.* ② **94955**

Ravel Orch Wks. *Minnesota Orch/Skrowaczewski/LSO/Frémaux.* ② ② **94933**

Rossi Wks for Org & Hpd. *Castagnetti.* ② **94966**

Scarlatti, A Sinfonie di concerto grosso. *Marti/Capella Tiberina/Perrone/Nigito.* ② ② **94658**

Schubert Stg Qts, Vol 4. *Diogenes Qt.* ② **94464**

Szymanowski Cpte Wks for Vn & Pf. *Monteiro/Santos.* ② ② **94979**

**BR-KLASSIK** *br-online.de*

Beethoven Missa solemniss (pp2014). *Sols incl Kühmeier & Padmore/Bavarian RSO/Haitink.* ⑆ **900130**

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Mahler Sym No 1. *Hungarian Nat PO/Kocsis.* ⑆ **BMC188**

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Tchaikovsky Sym No 5 (pp1973). *International Fest Orch/Stokowski.* ⑆ **CC9007D**

**CANTALOUPE** *cantaloupemusic.com*

Lang, D Difficulty of Crossing a Field. *Harlem Qt.* ⑆ **CA21107**

**CAPRICCIO** *capriccio.at*

Adès. Debussy. Ravel Sound Escapes – Stg Qts. *Signum Qt.* ⑆ **C5239**

Bach, JS Goldberg Vars. *Barto.* ② **C5243**

Czerny Stg Qts. *Sheridan Ens.* ② **C5234**

Françaix, Poulenc Concs for Two Pfs. *Bard, M & R/Deutsche*

*Staatsphilh, Rheinland-Pfalz/Matiakh.* ⑆ **C5237**

Prokofiev Cpte Sym. *Gürzenich Orch, Cologne/Kitaenko.* ② ⑤ ④ **C7190**

Schnittke Film Music Edn. *Berlin RSO/Stobel.* ② ④ **C7196**

Thuille Selected Songs. *Pfister/Höll.* ⑆ **C5238**

Weill Edn, Vol 1. *Various artists.* ② ⑤ ④ **C7178**

Various Cpsrs Berliner Gamburg. *Ens Art d'Echo/Laake.* ⑆ **C5206**

**CARPE DIEM** *carpediem-records.de*

Bach, JS. Weiss Lute Wks. *Satoh.* ⑆ **CD16305**

**CARUS** *carus-verlag.com*

Schwemmer Perlmutterfalter – Chor Wks. *Athesinus Consort*

*Berlin/Bresgott.* ⑆ **CARUS83 464**

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Gomółka Audite, gentes!. *Ceremużyńska/Reyes/Castro.* ⑆ **ACD214**

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Bach, JS. Bartók. Saariaho Bach & Beyond, Part 2. *Koh.* ② ② **CDR90000 154**

Veracini Cpte Sonate accademiche. *Trio Settecento.* ④ ③ **CDR90000 155**

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Bach, JS St Matthew Passion (arr Mendelssohn). *Consensus*

*Vocalis/Netherlands SO/de Vriend.* ② ② **CC72661**

Schubert Stg Qnt, D956. *Kuijken Qt.* ② ② **CC72647**

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Brahms Vn Sons. *Fields/Young.* ⑆ **CHRCDO97**

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Berlioz Harold en Italie. *Ehnes/Melbourne SO/Davis, A.* ② ② **CHSA5155**

Brahms Wks for Solo Pf, Vol 4. *Douglas.* ⑆ **CHAN10857**

Handel. Smith, JC Hpd Wks. *Perkins.* ⑆ **CHAN0807**

d'Indy Orch Wks, Vol 6. *Gylfadóttir/Iceland SO/Gamba.* ② ② **CHSA5157**

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Bach, JS Toccatas, BWV913-916. *Bühler-Kestler.* ④ ② **CHA3041**

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Baxter Wks, Vol 1. *Various artists.* ② ② **CC6025-2; ② ② CC6025-6**

Various Cpsrs Jews of New York. *Novak.* ② **CC4832-2**

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Prokofiev. Stravinsky. Tchaikovsky Ballets Russes. *Rozenova.* ② **CC777 716**

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Orbán Hungarian Chor Wks. *Ars Nova/Accord Qt/Kiss.* ④ **CRO28**

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Borodin. Busoni. Dan Silk Road. *Argovia PO/Bostock.* ② ② **COV91413**

Butterworth. Stephan End of Time. *Ens Aix/Aachen SO/Abdullah.* ② ② **COV91418**

Dvořák Sym. Nos 4 & 8. *Nuremberg St PO/Bosch.* ② ② **COV91412**

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Graupner Concerti e Musica di tavola. *Accademia Daniel/Ad-El.* ② **CP0777 645-2**

Jadassohn Sym. Nos 1-4. *Brandenburg St Orch, Frankfurt/Griffiths.* ② ② **CP0777 607-2**

Lehár Paganini. *Sols incl Knepler & Jenbach/Munich Rad Orch/Schirmer.* ② ② **CP0777 699-2**

Spohr Sym. Nos 7 & 9. *NDR Rad PO, Hanover/Griffiths.* ② ② **CP0777 746-2**

Telemann Grand Concs for Mixed Insts, Vol 2. *Stagione Frankfurt/Schneider.* ② **CP0777 890-2**

Weber Silvana. *Sols incl Roth & Kaune/Munich Rad Orch/Schirmer.* ② ② **CP0777 727-2**

**CRYSTAL RECORDS** *crystalrecords.com*

Prokofiev Vn Sons. *Weiss Duo.* ② **CD882**

Various Cpsrs Fate & Fire – Wind Qnts. *Westwood Wind Qnt/Bergman.* ② **CD790**

**DANSING**

Various Cpsrs Au vieux moulin – Wks for Mountain Dulcimer. *Evans, D.* ② **DSM7**

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Various Cpsrs Wait For Me. *Hvorostovsky.* ② **DE3475**

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Geminiani. Handel Bewitched. *Johanssen/Passions de l'Ame/Lüthi.* ② **888413 04088-2**

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Liszt Odyssey of Love: Liszt & His Women. *Parham.* ② ② **DXL1156**

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Various Cpsrs Treasured Classics – Wks for Vn & Pf. *Gamaloza/Taskov.* ② **DMV114**

**DISQUES DOM FORLANE** *disquesdom.com*

Milhaud Wks. *Various artists.* ② ② **F0R17012**

**DIVINE ART** *divine-art.co.uk*

Handel Hpd Stes, Vol 3. *Rowland.* ② **DDA21225**

Telemann Great Vns, Vol 1. *Sheppard Skærved.* ② ② **ATH23203**

<b>DIVOX</b>	<i>divox.com</i>
Tchaikovsky, B Vc Son <b>Weinberg</b> 24 Preludes. <i>Rovner/Ivanzhina.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>CXD21001-6</b>
<b>DOCUMENTS</b>	
Donizetti Five Cpte Ops (r1950-58). <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>600218</b>
Wagner Götterdämmerung. <i>Neuhold.</i>	Ⓢ <b>4</b> <b>233981</b>
Wagner Rheingold. <i>Neuhold.</i>	Ⓢ <b>2</b> <b>DHR3982</b>
Wagner Siegfried. <i>Neuhold.</i>	Ⓢ <b>4</b> <b>233980</b>
Wagner Walküre. <i>Neuhold.</i>	Ⓢ <b>4</b> <b>233978</b>
Various Cpsrs Live in Concert (pp1949-58). <i>Klemperer.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>600225</b>
<b>LA DOLCE VOLTA</b>	<i>ladolcevolta.com</i>
Mozart Pf Sons Nos 11, 17 & 18. <i>Pressler.</i>	ⓕ <b>LDV19</b>
<b>DOREMI</b>	<i>doremi.com</i>
Chopin Pf Wks (r1955-65). <i>Argerich.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>DHR8036</b>
Szymanowski Mythes. Pf Sons Nos 2 & 3 (pp1982). <i>Kagan/Richter.</i>	ⓕ <b>DHR8037</b>
<b>DUX</b>	<i>dux.pl</i>
Borkowski, M Orch & Chor Wks. <i>Various orchs &amp; chs/</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX1149</b>
Borkowski, P.	ⓕ <b>DUX1149</b>
Brahms Pf Wks, Op 116-119. <i>Kamasa.</i>	ⓕ <b>2</b> <b>DUX1130/31</b>
Bridge. Penard. Purcell Midsummer Phantasy. <i>Ens Contraste.</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX1126</b>
Dvořák Vc Conc <i>Smetana</i> Vltava. <i>Szambelan/Sinfonietta</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX0804</b>
Kracovia/Kabara.	ⓕ <b>DUX0804</b>
Crabolf Pf Wks. Songs. <i>Radziejewska/Kozłowski/Rutkowski.</i>	ⓕ <b>2</b> <b>DUX1142/3</b>
Kościów Stg Qts. <i>NeoQt.</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX1171</b>
Wieniawski Wks for Vn & Orch. <i>Staśkiewicz/Henryk</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX0797</b>
Wieniawski PO, Lublin/Wijatkowski.	ⓕ <b>DUX0797</b>
Various Cpsrs Vn français. <i>Dandwicz/Rutkowska-Schock.</i>	ⓕ <b>DUX1114</b>
<b>DYNAMIC</b>	<i>dynamic.it</i>
Various Cpsrs Twentieth-Century Women Cpsrs. <i>Trio des Alpes.</i>	ⓕ <b>CDS7717</b>
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Rihm Et lux. <i>Huelgas Ens/Minguet Qt/Van Nevel.</i>	ⓕ <b>4811585</b>
Schubert Pf Sons Nos 18 & 21. Impromptus. Moments musicaux. <i>Schiff.</i>	ⓕ <b>2</b> <b>4811572</b>
Various Cpsrs Cantate e tranquillo. <i>Keller Qt.</i>	ⓕ <b>4811052</b>
<b>ELOQUENCE</b>	
Beethoven Syms Nos 3, 7 & 8 (r1951-53). <i>BPO/Kempen.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>ELQ482 0270</b>
Strauss, R Ariadne auf Naxos (r1969). <i>Sols incl Hillebrecht &amp; Fischer-Dieskau/Bavarian RSO/Böhm.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>ELQ482 1653</b>
Various Cpsrs Cpte DG Recs. <i>Martinon.</i>	Ⓢ <b>4</b> <b>ELQ480 8926</b>
Various Cpsrs Decca Recs. <i>Voicu.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>ELQ480 7841</b>
Various Cpsrs Songs with Hp (r1961). <i>Elis.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>ELQ480 7400</b>
<b>EM RECORDS</b>	<i>em-records.com</i>
Pott Towers of Man. <i>Inuoe/Pott/Kravchuk/Phillips.</i>	ⓕ <b>EMRCD028</b>
Various Cpsrs Audite finem. <i>Charter Ch of Homerton Coll, Cambridge/Trocme-Latter.</i>	ⓕ <b>EMRCD027</b>
<b>ETCETERA</b>	<i>etcetera-records.com</i>
Bach, JS Actus tragicus. <i>Musica Amphion.</i>	ⓕ <b>KTC1489</b>
Schubert Pf Duets, Vol 1. <i>Vermeulen/Peeters.</i>	ⓕ <b>KTC1501</b>
Smit Cpte Wks. <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓢ <b>4</b> <b>KTC1516</b>
<b>FARAO</b>	<i>farao-classics.de</i>
Various Cpsrs Chor Wks. <i>Audi Jugendchorakademie/Munich Op Hns/Nagano.</i>	ⓕ <b>B108084</b>
<b>FIRST HAND</b>	<i>firsthandrecords.com</i>
Brahms. Keys. Sibelius Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Saram/Frith.</i>	ⓕ <b>FHR34</b>
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Cesare Musicali melodie. <i>Sacqueboutiers/Tubéry/Pluhar/Letzbor.</i>	ⓕ <b>FLO3615</b>



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Various Cpsrs In the Mood for Tuba. <i>Leleu/Lara SO/Cebalios.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>FON1402015</b>
Various Cpsrs Pierrots lunaires - Vn & Vc Duos. <i>Clapiès/Leviannois.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>FON1402013</b>
<b>GENUIN</b>	<i>genuinde</i>
Albinoni. Vivaldi Serenissima - Venetian Ch Sons. <i>Camerata degli Amici/González.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5332</b>
Bach, CPE. Devienne Fl Concs. <i>Renggli/Basle CO/Dean.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5338</b>
Blake, H Diversions. <i>Kloeckner/Blake.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5346</b>
Jensen Orch Wks. <i>Phillb Baden-Baden/Baleff.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5347</b>
Schubert Sehnsucht - Cpte Chor Wks for Male Voices, Vol 1. <i>Camerata Musica Limburg/Schumacher.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5349</b>
Schubert Stg Qts, D46, 703 & 804. <i>Klenke Qt.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5360</b>
Trümpy Canti elegiaci. <i>Various artists.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5546</b>
Various Cpsrs Soul of the Plains - Venezuelan Wks. <i>Saxon Wind Phill/Alma Llanera Qnt/Clamor.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5358</b>
Various Cpsrs Duets for Fl & Vc. <i>Koga/Lomakov.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5348</b>
Various Cpsrs Etudes. <i>Wirth.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5342</b>
Various Cpsrs Ob Wks. <i>Hecker.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5345</b>
Various Cpsrs Vc Wks. <i>Palm, J.</i>	ⓕ <b>GENI5341</b>
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Friedman Fortress of Solitude. <i>Orig Cast.</i>	ⓕ <b>84488</b>
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Gasparini Bajazet. <i>Sols incl Mineccia/Auser Musici/Ipata.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>GCD923504</b>
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Lang, K Org Wks, Vol 2. <i>Lang.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>GOD29</b>
<b>GRAMOLA</b>	<i>gramola.at</i>
Beethoven Vn Sons, Vol 2. <i>Irnberger/Korstick.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>99051</b>
Liszt Live at the Liszt Fest Raiding. <i>Bloch.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>99070</b>
Various Cpsrs Meinem Kinde: Children's Songs & Lullabies. <i>Ziemer/Riem.</i>	ⓕ <b>99056</b>
<b>GRAND PIANO</b>	
Ekanayaka Rhapsodies. <i>Ekanayaka.</i>	ⓕ <b>GP693</b>
Hofmann, J Pf Wks. <i>Yasynsky.</i>	ⓕ <b>GP675</b>
Jaberi Pf Sons. Ballades. <i>Jaberi.</i>	ⓕ <b>GP694</b>
Koželuch Cpte Kybd Sons, Vol 4. <i>English.</i>	ⓕ <b>GP645</b>
Voríšek Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 2. <i>Urban.</i>	ⓕ <b>GP671</b>
<b>HALLÉ</b>	<i>halle.co.uk</i>
Mahler Sym No 9 (pp2014). <i>Hallé Orch/Elder.</i>	ⓕ <b>HLD7541</b>
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Bach, JS Wks for Vc & Hpd (r1971). <i>Starker/Růžičková.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>CD93 726</b>
Beethoven. Mozart Stg Trios (pp1966). <i>Grumiaux Trio.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>CD93 727</b>
Møller. Nørgård Chor Wks. <i>Aarhus Girls' Ch.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>CD94 704</b>
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Brahms Cl Sons. <i>Coppola/Staier.</i>	ⓕ <b>HMC90 2187</b>
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<b>HERITAGE</b>	<i>heritage-records.com</i>
Schubert Schöne Müllerin. Winterreise (r1951/55).	ⓕ <b>2</b> <b>HTGCD288/9</b>
Fischer-Dieskau/Moore.	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>HTGCD287</b>
Schubert. Voríšek Kybd Wks. <i>Joeres.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>HTGCD287</b>
Telemann Ob Sons. <i>Francis, S/London Hpd Ens.</i>	ⓕ <b>HTGCD281</b>
<b>HUNGAROTON</b>	<i>hungarotonmusic.com</i>
Bach, JS Org Wks. <i>Teleki.</i>	ⓕ <b>HCD32735</b>
Bach, JS Vn Concs. <i>Kalló/Capella Savaria.</i>	ⓕ <b>HCD32749</b>
<b>HYPERION</b>	<i>hyperion-records.co.uk</i>
Albéniz. Granados Romantic Pf Conc, Vol 65. <i>Mestre/</i>	ⓕ <b>CDA67918</b>
BBC Scottish SO/Brabbins.	ⓕ <b>CDA68070</b>
Grieg Lyric Pieces. <i>Hough.</i>	ⓕ <b>CDA68088</b>
Jacquet of Mantua Missa Surge Petre. Motets. <i>Brabant Ens/</i>	ⓕ <b>CDA68088</b>
Rice.	ⓕ <b>CDA68088</b>
Hough Missa mirabilis <i>Vaughan Williams</i> Dona nobis pacem. <i>Colorado Sym Chor &amp; Orch/Litton.</i>	ⓕ <b>CDA68096</b>
Various Cpsrs Heure exquise: A French Songbook. <i>Coote/</i>	ⓕ <b>CDA67962</b>
Johnson, G.	ⓕ <b>CDA67962</b>
<b>KAMÉR</b>	
Various Cpsrs Amber Songs. <i>Kamér Youth Ch/Liepinš.</i>	ⓕ <b>KCD013</b>
<b>KLANGLOGO</b>	<i>klanglogo.de</i>
Brahms. Chopin. Fauré Ballades. <i>Antonioli.</i>	ⓕ <b>KL1408</b>
Chopin Preludes. <i>Antonioli.</i>	ⓕ <b>KL1409</b>
<b>LINN</b>	<i>linnrecords.com</i>
Brahms Cl Qnt. <i>Schatzberger/Fitzwilliam Qt.</i>	ⓕ <b>BKD278</b>
Monteverdi Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria. <i>Boston Baroque/</i>	ⓕ <b>3</b> <b>CKD451</b>
Pearlman.	ⓕ ⓘ <b>CKD495</b>
Xenakis IX. <i>Kuniko.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>CKD495</b>

<b>LPO</b>	<i>lpo.co.uk</i>
Beethoven Egmont Ov. Sym No 6 (r1991/92). <i>LPO/Tennstedt.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>LP00085</b>
<b>LYRITA</b>	<i>lyrita.co.uk</i>
Seiber Ulysses (bp1972). <i>LSO/Atherton.</i>	ⓕ <b>SRCD348</b>
Various Cpsrs British Vn & Vc Concs (bp1957-61). <i>Various artists.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>REAM2114</b>
<b>MARCO POLO</b>	<i>naxos.com/mp.htm</i>
Various Cpsrs Contemporaries of the Strauss Family, Vol 1. <i>Czech Chbr PO Pardubice/Georgiadis.</i>	ⓕ <b>8 225365</b>
<b>MELODIYA</b>	<i>melody.su</i>
Bach, JS Partita No 2. English Ste No 2 (r1982/88). <i>Sokolov.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>MELLP0045</b>
Gavrilin Chimes (r1988). <i>Sols/Moscow Chbr Ch/Minin.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>MELCD100 2290</b>
Melikov Legend of Love (r1988). <i>Moscow RSO/Gergiev.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>MELCD100 2326</b>
Tchaikovsky Seasons. <i>Sergey Zhilin Trio.</i>	ⓕ <b>MELCD600 1647</b>
Weinberg Syms Nos 5 & 10 (r1975/70). <i>Moscow PO/Kondrashin/</i>	ⓕ <b>MELCD100 2281</b>
Moscow CO/Barshai.	ⓕ <b>MELCD100 2281</b>
Various Cpsrs Op Arias (r1964/71). <i>Magomayev.</i>	ⓕ <b>MELCD100 2345</b>
Various Cpsrs Orch Wks (r1949-80). <i>Mravinsky.</i>	ⓕ ⓘ <b>MELCD100 2295</b>
Various Cpsrs Pf Wks (r1957-72). <i>Bashkirov.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>MELCD100 2288</b>
<b>MINUET</b>	
Bach, JS Goldberg Vars (r1955). <i>Gould.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428401</b>
Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 10, 21 & 23 (r1956/59). <i>Horowitz.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428405</b>
Beethoven Pf Sons Nos 12 & 23 (r1960) <i>Prokofiev</i> Pf Conc No 5 (r1959). <i>Richter/Warsaw PO/Rowicki.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428404</b>
Chopin. Grieg. <i>Rachmaninov</i> Pf Wks (r1956-62). <i>Rubinstein.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428402</b>
Rachmaninov Pf Concs Nos 2 & 3. Pf Wks. <i>Rachmaninov/</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428403</b>
Philadelphia Orch/Stokowski/Ormandy.	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>428403</b>
<b>MIRARE</b>	<i>mirare.fr</i>
Keiser Markuspassion. <i>Sols/Ens Jacques Moderne/Incogniti/</i>	ⓕ <b>MIR254</b>
Beyer/Suhubiette.	ⓕ <b>MIR254</b>
Rameau Pièces de clavecin. <i>Cuiller.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>MIR266</b>
<b>MUSIC &amp; ARTS</b>	<i>musicandarts.com</i>
Bruckner Syms (r1952-56). <i>Vienna SO/Adler.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>CD1283</b>
<b>NAÏVE</b>	<i>naive.fr</i>
Various Cpsrs Baltic Sea Voyage. <i>Baltic Sea Youth PO/Järvi, K.</i>	ⓕ <b>V5407</b>
<b>NAXOS</b>	<i>naxos.com</i>
Bach, JS Wks for Hpd. <i>Häkkinen.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573087</b>
German Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Long/Buckle.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573407</b>
Korngold Robin Hood. <i>Moscow SO/Stromberg.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573369</b>
Liszt Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 39. <i>Husson.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573390</b>
Malipiero Sinf degli eroi. <i>Thessaloniki St SO/Clozel.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 572766</b>
Penderecki Magnificat. <i>Warsaw PO/Wit.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 572697</b>
Prokofiev Sym No 3. <i>São Paulo SO/Alsop.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573452; 8 NBD0047</b>
Rossini Gazza ladra. <i>Sols/Virtuosi Brunensis/Zedda.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 660369/71</b>
Schmitt Wks for Vn & Pf. <i>Halska/Chaiquin.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573169</b>
Waghalter Orch Wks. <i>New Russia St SO/Walker.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573338</b>
Zhou Long. Chen Yi Orch Wks. <i>NZSO/Ang.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 570611</b>
Various Cpsrs Frottolo. <i>Ring Around Qt &amp; Consort.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>8 573320</b>
<b>NIMBUS</b>	<i>wyastone.co.uk</i>
Bartók. Dorati. Seiber Wks for Vc & Orch. <i>Wallfisch/BBC NOW/</i>	ⓕ <b>NI5919</b>
Takács-Nagy.	ⓕ <b>NI5919</b>
Beethoven Diabelli Vars. Pf Son No 23. <i>Van Bloss.</i>	ⓕ <b>NI6276</b>
Jackson, N Chbr & Org Wks. <i>Bevan, M/Concertante of London/</i>	ⓕ <b>NI6301</b>
McLean.	ⓕ <b>NI6301</b>
Röntgen Pf Wks, Vol 1. <i>Anderson, M.</i>	ⓕ <b>NI5918</b>
Various Cpsrs 20th Century Romantics - Db Wks. <i>Bayley/Duce.</i>	ⓕ <b>NI6308</b>
Various Cpsrs 75th Birthday Tribute (r1973-2014). <i>Jones, M.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>NI1718</b>
Various Cpsrs Baroque Inspirations. <i>Udagawa/SCO/Kraemer.</i>	ⓕ <b>NI6299</b>
<b>NMC</b>	<i>nmcrc.co.uk</i>
Wood, H Wild Cyclamen. <i>McCaldin/Gilchrist/Williams, R/</i>	ⓕ <b>NMCD201</b>
Burnside/Lepper.	ⓕ <b>NMCD201</b>
<b>OBOE CLASSICS</b>	<i>oboeclassics.com</i>
Françaix Chbr Wks. <i>Polmear.</i>	ⓕ <b>CC2029</b>
<b>ODRADEK</b>	<i>odradek-records.com</i>
Rachmaninov Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 2. <i>Pizarro.</i>	ⓕ <b>ODRCD316</b>
<b>OEHMS</b>	<i>oehmclassics.de</i>
Bruckner Cpte Syms. <i>Saarbrücken RSO/Skrowaczewski.</i>	Ⓢ ⓘ <b>OC025</b>
Schubert Lieder arr for Vc & Pf. <i>Hülshoff/Frölich.</i>	ⓕ <b>OC1818</b>
Various Cpsrs Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Duffolt/Klett.</i>	ⓕ <b>OC765</b>



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 Brahms Pf Trios. *Tetzlaff, C & T/Vogt.* ② **ODE1271-2D**  
 Wallin Manyworlds. *Hardenberger/Bergen SO/Storgårds.* ② **ODE1267-2D**  
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 Bach, JS Kybd Wks, Vol 1. *Sheng.* ③ **PCL0076**  
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 Grieg. Sibelius Malinconia - Wks for Vc & Pf. *Geringas/Fountain.* ② **PH15005**  
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 Mahler Sym No 5. Kindertotenlieder. *Fassbaender/NDR SO/Tennstedt.* ② **PH13058**  
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 Rore Ancor che col partire. *Various artists.* ② **RIC355**  
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 Various Cpsrs Music from Ireland. *New Dublin Voices.* ② **CD148**  
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 Strauss, R Lieder. *Rozario/Owen.* ② **5060192 780505**  
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Various Cpsrs Org in Florence. *Giacomelli.* ② **TC860002**  
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Various Cpsrs Plectrum Orch Music in Late-19th-Century Florence. *Gino Neri Chbr Ens/Florentino, G.* ② **TC840001**  
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Various Cpsrs In Concert (bp1939). *Schipa.* ② **VAIA1280**  
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Various Cpsrs Songs & Arias (rpp1955-64). *Schipa.* ② **VAIA1281**  
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 Schubert Schöne Müllerin. *Peter/Deutch.* ② **WHLIVE0075**  
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 Various Cpsrs Yarlung Records 10th Anniversary. *Various artists.* ② **YAR42482**  
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## DVD & BLU-RAY

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 Various Cpsrs Concert. Documentary. *Hannigan/Mahler CO.* ② **ACC20327**  
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**ALPHA** outhere-music.com/alpha  
 Lully Bourgeois gentilhomme. *Coin.* ② **ALPHA707**  
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 Handel Admeto (pp2006). *Sols incl Rexroth, Lichtenstein & Bach, M/Halle Op/Arman.* ⑤ (② **DVD +  + two CDs**) **109 067**  
 (M) **109 067**

Strauss, R Feuersnot (pp2014). *Sols incl Carbone, Henschel, D & Wawiloff/Massimo Th, Palermo/Ferro.* ② **DVD 109 065; ② DVD 109 066**  
 (F) **DVD 109 065; ② DVD 109 066**

Various Cpsrs Video Tapes (pp1982-95). *Gulda.* ⑦ **DVD 109 068**  
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 Mahler Syms Nos 4 & 5 (pp2010). *Tilling/World Orch for Peace/Gergiev.* ② **731304**  
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Mahler Syms Nos 9 & 10 (pp2009/08). *Frankfurt RSO/Järvi, P.* ② **DVD 729708; ② DVD 729804**  
 (F) **DVD 729708; ② DVD 729804**

Mahler. Panufnik, R. Strauss, R Orch Wks from the BBC Proms (pp2014). *World Orch for Peace/Gergiev.* ② **DVD 730108; ② DVD 730204**  
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**DELOS** delosmusic.com  
 Various Cpsrs Sop Arias. *Alieva/Russian Nat Orch/Orbellian.* ② **DVD DV7007; ② DVD DV7008**  
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# REVIEWS INDEX

<b>A</b>			Night Piece (Notturmo)	<b>27</b>	<b>Dupré</b>		<b>Hasse</b>		<b>Kurtág</b>		
<b>Abrahamsen</b>			Piano Concerto, Op 13	<b>27</b>	Final, Op 27 No 2	<b>69</b>	Keyboard works (various)	<b>62</b>	Bach Transcriptions	<b>62</b>	
Orchestral works	<b>26</b>		Suite on English Folk Tunes, ‘A Time There Was’, Op 90	<b>28</b>	<b>Dvarionas</b>		<b>Haydn</b>		Játékok	<b>62</b>	
<b>Aho</b>			The Nightingale and the Rose	<b>79</b>	Pezzo elegiaco, ‘By the Lake’	<b>57</b>	The Boatman, HobXXXIa/246	<b>74</b>	<b>L</b>		
Piano works	<b>60</b>		The Poet’s Echo, Op 76 No 4	<b>79</b>	<b>Dvořák</b>		The Spirit’s Song, HobXXVIa/41	<b>74</b>		<b>La Borde</b>	
<b>Alkan</b>			<b>Bruckner</b>		Cello Concerto in B minor	<b>95</b>	<b>Head</b>			Recueils de chansons	<b>47</b>
Piano works	<b>60</b>		Mass No 1	<b>95</b>	Concertos (complete)	<b>47</b>	The Estuary	<b>83</b>		<b>Lassus</b>	
<b>Arensky</b>			Overture in G minor	<b>95</b>	Symphonies (complete)	<b>47</b>	A Green Cornfield	<b>83</b>		Confitebor tibi Domine	<b>83</b>
Piano Trio No 1, Op 32	<b>52</b>		Symphonies – Nos 1, 3, 6 & 9	<b>95</b>	String Quartet No 12, ‘American’	<b>104</b>	<b>Heinichen</b>			<b>Lauridsen</b>	
<b>Arnold</b>			Symphony No 4, ‘Romantic’ (1878/80 version, ed Nowak)	<b>28</b>	String Quintet No 3	<b>104</b>	Canticum Simeonis	<b>74</b>		O magnum mysterium	<b>81</b>
Recorder Sonatina, Op 41	<b>55</b>		Symphonies – Nos 6 & 7 (both ed Nowak)	<b>29</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>Elgar</b>	Die Abenteuer von der berühmigten Ruprecht – Prelude	<b>55</b>	<b>Leguizamón</b>		
<b>B</b>	<b>Bach, CPE</b>		Symphony No 7	<b>45</b>		Cockaigne, ‘In London Town’	<b>31</b>	<b>Holloway</b>		Solo guitar works	<b>62</b>
	Symphonies (various)	<b>26</b>	<b>Brühi</b>			Sursum corda (transcr Lemare)	<b>69</b>	Horn Trio	<b>55</b>	<b>Leigh, W</b>	
	Trio, Wq88	<b>44</b>	Atlas-Ouverture	<b>55</b>		Symphony No 1	<b>31</b>	<b>Holmboe</b>		A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Suite	<b>53</b>
	<b>Bach, JS</b>		L’attaque du moulin – Le jour tombe...Adieu, forêt profonde	<b>93</b>		<b>Enescu</b>		Sonata, Op 145	<b>55</b>	<b>Leighton</b>	
	Musikalisches Opfer, BWV1079	<b>44</b>	<b>Bruneau</b>			Cello Sonata, Op 26 No 1 – Allegro	<b>45</b>	<b>Honegger</b>		Choral works (various)	<b>75</b>
	Viola da gamba Sonatas – BWV1027; BWV1028; BWV1029	<b>44</b>	<b>Bull</b>			Symphonie concertante, Op 8	<b>31</b>	Un grand sommeil noir	<b>80</b>	<b>Leoncavallo</b>	
	<b>Bairstow</b>		<b>Busoni</b>		Symphony No 1	<b>31</b>	<b>Horovitz</b>		Pagliacci – Qual fiamma	<b>91</b>	
Let all mortal flesh keep silence	<b>81</b>	<b>Buxtehude</b>		<b>Escaich</b>		Lady Macbeth: A Scena	<b>83</b>	<b>Lim, L</b>			
<b>Balada</b>		Fantasia on ‘Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern’, BuxWV223	<b>69</b>	Concerto for Orchestra	<b>40</b>	<b>Howells</b>		The Compass	<b>57</b>		
Works for orchestra	<b>26</b>	<b>C</b>	Bercesse élégiaque, Op 42	<b>45</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Hrabal</b>		The Guest	<b>57</b>		
<b>Barber</b>			<b>Buñuel</b>			<b>Fagerlund</b>	<b>31</b>	King David	<b>83</b>	Pearl, Ochre, Hair String	<b>57</b>
Nocturne, Op 33	<b>27</b>		<b>Castelnuovo-Tedesco</b>			Ignite	<b>31</b>	<b>Liszt</b>		Works for violin and piano	<b>49</b>
Piano Concerto, Op 38	<b>27</b>		Concerto Italiano	<b>29</b>		Violin Concerto, ‘Darkness in Light’	<b>31</b>	Piano works (various)	<b>71</b>	Valse-Improptu, S213	<b>49</b>
<b>Barry</b>			Evangélion	<b>61</b>		<b>Fauré</b>		<b>Lobo</b>			
Jabberwocky	<b>55</b>		Violin Concerto No 2, ‘I profeti’	<b>29</b>		Four Songs, Op 39 – No 2, Fleur jetée; No 4, Les roses d’Ispahan	<b>79</b>	Ave Maria a 8	<b>79</b>		
<b>Beamish</b>			<b>Cavallieri</b>			Le papillon et la fleur, Op 1 No 1	<b>79</b>	Ave regina caelorum	<b>79</b>		
Piobaireachd	<b>44</b>	Rappresentatione di anima e di corpo	<b>86</b>	Masques et bergamasques, Op 112	<b>53</b>	Libera me	<b>79</b>				
<b>Beethoven</b>		<b>Chopin</b>		<b>Forquerry</b>		Missa Maria Magdalene – Kyrie	<b>79</b>				
Piano Sonata, Op 31 No 1	<b>94</b>	Piano works (various)	<b>61</b>	La Laborde	<b>47</b>	Versa est in luctum	<b>79</b>				
Piano Sonatas (complete)	<b>67</b>	Piano Sonata No 3	<b>71</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>Gerarde</b>	<b>Ireland</b>					
Piano Sonatas – Nos 8 & 14	<b>71</b>	<b>Christiansen</b>					Earth’s Call	<b>83</b>			
Piano Sonatas (various)	<b>60</b>	It is spring, Op 56	<b>55</b>				Spring Will Not Wait	<b>83</b>			
Romances – Nos 1 & 2	<b>94</b>	<b>Clérambault</b>					<b>Ives</b>				
Songs	<b>74</b>	Orphée	<b>83</b>				Symphonies – Nos 1 & 2	<b>32</b>			
Violin Sonatas – Nos 9 & 10	<b>94</b>	<b>Cour</b>					<b>J</b>	<b>Jackson, F</b>			
<b>Berlioz</b>		Various works	<b>74</b>						Evening Hymn	<b>81</b>	
Symphonie fantastique	<b>40</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Danyel</b>	<b>Jacob</b>							
<b>Bizet</b>			Songs (various)	<b>80</b>	An Encore for Michala	<b>55</b>					
Orchestral works	<b>27</b>		<b>Debussy</b>		Sonatina	<b>55</b>					
<b>Blei</b>			Préludes (selection)	<b>71</b>	<b>Jacob, H</b>						
Vorspiel (zu einem Abschied)	<b>55</b>		Prélude à L’après-midi d’un faune	<b>45</b>	Salome Revisited	<b>57</b>					
<b>Blumenbach</b>			<b>Destouches</b>		String Quartet	<b>57</b>					
Preludium	<b>55</b>		Sémélé	<b>93</b>	Winter Light	<b>57</b>					
<b>Borodin</b>		<b>Dohnányi</b>		<b>Janáček</b>							
Prince Igor – Polovtsian Dances	<b>40</b>	Piano works (various)	<b>94</b>	String Quartets – Nos 1 & 2	<b>46</b>						
<b>Borup-Jørgensen</b>		<b>Dowland</b>		<b>Johnson, R</b>							
Fantasia, Op 75	<b>55</b>	Songs (various)	<b>80</b>	Care-charming sleep	<b>80</b>						
<b>Boulanger, L</b>		<b>Dring, M</b>		From the famous peak of Derby	<b>80</b>						
Les lilas qui avaient fleuri	<b>79</b>	<b>Dudevant</b>		Have you seen the bright lily grow?	<b>80</b>						
<b>Brahms</b>		En plein Pacifique – Prelude	<b>55</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>Kidane</b>						
Piano works (various)	<b>61</b>					Tourbillon	<b>55</b>				
Serenades – Nos 1 & 2	<b>27</b>					<b>Knight, I</b>					
<b>Brassens</b>						Prelude	<b>55</b>				
Colombine	<b>80</b>					<b>Koechlin</b>					
<b>Britten</b>						Il pleure dans mon coeur,					
Alpine Suite	<b>55</b>					Op 22 No 4	<b>80</b>				
Early Morning Bathe	<b>83</b>										



<b>Mayr</b>		<b>Parsons</b>		<b>Reger</b>		Chamber Symphonies		<b>Vaughan Williams</b>	
Jacob a Labano fugiens	<b>76</b>	Credo quod redemptor meus vivit	<b>81</b>	Fugue, Op 59 No 6	<b>69</b>	(arr Barshai) – Op 49 <i>a</i> ;		Oboe Concerto	<b>28</b>
<b>McCabe</b>		Libera me Domine	<b>81</b>	Toccata, Op 59 No 5	<b>69</b>	Op 110 <i>a</i> ; Op 118 <i>a</i>	<b>35</b>	Silent Noon	<b>83</b>
Fantasy on a Theme of Liszt	<b>33</b>	Peccantem me quotidie	<b>81</b>	<b>Regnart</b>		Concertino	<b>40</b>	Symphonies – Nos 4 & 8	<b>38</b>
Organ works (various)	<b>63</b>	<b>Pärt</b>		Litaniae deiparae Mariae virginis	<b>83</b>	Piano Quintet, Op 57	<b>51</b>	We'll to the woods no more	<b>83</b>
Studies – No 1, 'Capriccio'; No 2, 'Sostenuto'	<b>33</b>	Magnificat	<b>81</b>	<b>Respighi</b>		Piano Trio No 2, Op 67	<b>52</b>	<b>Vivaldi</b>	
Symphony No 1, 'Elegy'	<b>33</b>	<b>Pergolesi</b>		The Birds	<b>53</b>	Preludes, Op 34 –		The Four Seasons	<b>38</b>
Tuning	<b>33</b>	Orfeo	<b>83</b>	<b>Richter, FX</b>		excs (arr Tsyganov)	<b>51</b>	Violin Concertos (various)	<b>38</b>
<b>Medtner</b>		<b>Petrini</b>		De profundis a 12	<b>77</b>	String Quartet No 2, Op 68	<b>51</b>	Violin Concertos –	
Piano works (various)	<b>63</b>	Harp Sonata No 3	<b>47</b>	Messa de Requiem a 16	<b>77</b>	Symphony No 7, 'Leningrad'	<b>36</b>	RV189; RV273; RV286; RV367; RV371; RV390	<b>38</b>
<b>Mendelssohn</b>		<b>Pleyel</b>		Sinfonia con fuga in G minor	<b>77</b>	<b>Sinding</b>		<b>W</b>	
Piano works (various)	<b>63</b>	String Quartets – Ben359; Ben360; Ben361	<b>49</b>	<b>Rihm</b>		Ouverture til ekteskapet	<b>55</b>	<b>Wagner</b>	
String Quartet No 2	<b>49</b>	<b>Poulenc</b>		Ernster Gesang	<b>36</b>	<b>Smetana</b>		Der fliegende Holländer	<b>91</b>
Symphony No 2, 'Lobgesang'	<b>95</b>	Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra	<b>40</b>	<b>Rosing-Schow</b>		Piano works (various)	<b>69</b>	<b>Walton</b>	
<b>Messiaen</b>		Fleurs	<b>79</b>	Alliège – I; II; ...aus atmen...	<b>51</b>	String Quartets – No 1, 'From my Life'; No 2	<b>24</b>	Cello Concerto	<b>39</b>
Des canyons aux étoiles	<b>34</b>	<b>Pritchard, D</b>		Lines	<b>51</b>	<b>Smyth, E</b>		Symphony No 2	<b>39</b>
Fantaisie	<b>49</b>	Violin Concerto, 'Wall of Water'	<b>34</b>	Nanu	<b>51</b>	Cello Sonata	<b>57</b>	<b>Warlock</b>	
Quatuor pour la fin du temps	<b>49</b>	<b>Prokofiev</b>		Ritus I	<b>51</b>	<b>Stanford</b>		My Own Country	<b>83</b>
Thème et variations	<b>49</b>	Cello Sonata, Op 119	<b>45</b>	Three Simple Songs	<b>51</b>	La belle dame sans merci	<b>83</b>	<b>Watkins, H</b>	
<b>Meyerbeer</b>		Toccata in D minor, Op 11	<b>71</b>	<b>Rossini</b>		<b>Steffani</b>		Trio	<b>55</b>
L'Africaine – O Paradis	<b>93</b>	Visions fugitives, Op 22 (arr Derevianko)	<b>51</b>	Guillaume Tell – Asile héréditaire...	<b>93</b>	<b>Stenhammar</b>		Seven Pieces from 'The Threepenny Opera' (arr Frenkel)	<b>51</b>
<b>Monfort</b>		<b>Puccini</b>		<b>S</b>		The Song, Op 44 – Interlude	<b>53</b>	<b>Weinberg</b>	
Prélude des Princesses Tulipe et Petit Lys	<b>55</b>	La bohème – Done lieta uscì al tuo grido d'amore	<b>91</b>	<b>Sabaté</b>		<b>Stockhausen</b>		Symphony No 4	<b>39</b>
<b>Monk Feldman, B</b>		<b>Purcell, D</b>		Preludio	<b>55</b>	Mantra	<b>52</b>	Violin Concerto, Op 67	<b>39</b>
The Chaco Wilderness	<b>57</b>	The Masque of Hymen	<b>87</b>	<b>Saint-Saëns</b>		<b>Strauss, R</b>		<b>Whitacre</b>	
String Quartet No 1, 'Desert-scape'	<b>57</b>	<b>Purcell, H</b>		Cello Concerto No 1	<b>95</b>	Ariadne auf Naxos	<b>89</b>	Alleluia	<b>81</b>
Soft Horizons	<b>57</b>	The Fairy Queen	<b>87</b>	Cypres et lauriers, Op 156	<b>34</b>	Eine Alpensinfonie	<b>36</b>	<b>Widor</b>	
<b>Monte</b>		The Indian Queen	<b>87</b>	Danse macabre, Op 40 (arr Lemare, rev Warnier)	<b>34</b>	Feuersnot	<b>91</b>	Four Organ Symphonies, Op 13	<b>69</b>
Già fu chi m'ebbe cara	<b>83</b>	Pausanias, Z585 – Sweeter than roses (arr Britten)	<b>79</b>	Le vent dans la plane	<b>80</b>	Mädchenblumen, Op 22	<b>79</b>	<b>Wieniawska</b>	
Langue al vostro languir	<b>83</b>	<b>Q</b>		Symphony No 3, 'Organ'	<b>34</b>	Songs – various	<b>77</b>	En sourdine	<b>80</b>
Missa super Confitebor tibi Domine	<b>83</b>	<b>Quilter</b>		<b>Salieri</b>		Vier letzte Lieder	<b>36</b>	La lune blanche	<b>80</b>
<b>Moore, P</b>		Damask Roses	<b>79</b>	The Chimney Sweep	<b>88</b>	<b>Stravinsky</b>		Mandoline	<b>80</b>
Organ Sonata – Andante tranquillo	<b>69</b>	I will go with my father a-ploughing	<b>83</b>	<b>Sampoeschtian</b>		Pulcinella Suite	<b>53</b>	<b>Z</b>	
Three Prayers of Dietrich Bonhoeffer	<b>81</b>	I wish and I wish	<b>83</b>	Prélude-caprice	<b>55</b>	Sonata for Two Pianos	<b>40</b>	<b>Zanchi</b>	
<b>Mozart</b>		Seven Elizabethan Lyrics	<b>79</b>	<b>Sanda</b>		Symphony in E flat	<b>95</b>	Canzona II a 4	<b>83</b>
Don Giovanni	<b>86</b>	<b>R</b>		Hudbë z lesa – Prelude	<b>55</b>	Three Movements from Petrushka	<b>71</b>	<b>Collections</b>	
Fantasia, K608	<b>69</b>	<b>Rabaud</b>		<b>Satie</b>		<b>Szulc</b>		Diana Damrau – 'Fiamma del Belcanto'	<b>91</b>
Piano works (various)	<b>65</b>	Rolande et le mauvais garçon – Chante vieux jardin ta chanson de cigale	<b>93</b>	Piano works (various)	<b>68</b>	Clair de lune, Op 83 No 1	<b>80</b>	Iestyn Davies; Thomas Dunford – 'Flow My Tears'	<b>80</b>
Songs (various)	<b>74</b>	<b>Rachmaninov</b>		<b>Sauvage</b>		<b>T</b>		Jonathan Freeman-Attwood – 'The Neo-Classical Trumpet'	<b>53</b>
String Quartet No 15	<b>49</b>	Etude-tableau, Op 39 No 9	<b>65</b>	Prélude (Temps résolu)	<b>55</b>	<b>Tallis</b>		Bryan Hymel – 'Héroïque'	<b>93</b>
Die Zauberflöte	<b>87</b>	Fugue (1891)	<b>65</b>	<b>Scarlatti, A</b>		Nunc dimittis	<b>81</b>	Sunhae Im – 'Orfeo[s]'	<b>83</b>
<b>Muhly</b>		Piano Concerto No 2	<b>71</b>	L'Orfeo	<b>83</b>	<b>Taneyev</b>		Philippe Jaroussky – 'Green'	<b>80</b>
Old Bones	<b>80</b>	Piano Concerto No 3	<b>71</b>	<b>Schmitt, F</b>		Piano Quintet, Op 30	<b>52</b>	Momenta Quartet – 'Beneath Winter Light'	<b>57</b>
<b>Mundy</b>		Prelude, Op 32 No 11	<b>65</b>	Il pleure dans mon coeur	<b>80</b>	String Quintets – Op 14; Op 16	<b>52</b>	Nash Ensemble – 'Sea Eagle'	<b>55</b>
Sive vigilam	<b>81</b>	Symphonic Dances, Op 45 (transc Filsell, Potts)	<b>65</b>	<b>Schubert</b>		<b>Taverner</b>		Navarra Quartet – 'This Other Eden'	<b>83</b>
<b>Mussorgsky</b>		The Complete Preludes	<b>65</b>	Allegro, 'Lebensstürme', D947	<b>68</b>	Quemadmodum	<b>81</b>	Cappella Romana – 'Good Friday in Jerusalem'	<b>80</b>
Une larne (arr Krein)	<b>52</b>	Trio élégiaque No 1	<b>52</b>	Die Blumensprache, D519	<b>79</b>	<b>Tchaikovsky</b>		Carolyn Sampson – 'Fleurs'	<b>79</b>
<b>N</b>		Variations on a Theme of Corelli	<b>65</b>	Fantasia, D940	<b>68</b>	The Sleeping Beauty	<b>95</b>	Chantal Santon Jeffery – 'Sémélé'	<b>93</b>
<b>Nielsen</b>		Vespers	<b>76</b>	Hungarian Melody, D817	<b>68</b>	<b>Telemann</b>		The Sixteen – 'Flight of Angels'	<b>79</b>
Senk kun dit hoved, du blomst, Op 21 No 4	<b>46</b>	Vespers – Bogoroditse Dyevo	<b>81</b>	Im Haine, D738	<b>79</b>	Concertos – TWV43:G6; TWV52:a1	<b>36</b>	Various artists – 'Mercury Living Presence, Vol 3'	<b>85</b>
<b>P</b>		Vocalise, Op 34 No 14	<b>65</b>	Piano Sonata No 18	<b>68</b>	Ich hebe meine Augen auf zu den Bergen, TVWV7/17, Ouverture, TWV55:Es4	<b>74</b>		
<b>Palestrina/Bassano</b>		<b>Rameau</b>		Sonata in G major, D894	<b>94</b>	Suites – TWV55:a2; TWV55:D6	<b>36</b>		
Veni dilecta mi	<b>83</b>	<b>Ravel</b>		<b>Schumann</b>		<b>Tolkowsky</b>			
<b>Paredes, H</b>		Daphnis et Chloé – Suite No 2	<b>40</b>	Songs (various)	<b>79</b>	Fantaisie-Prélude	<b>55</b>		
Canciones lunáticas	<b>57</b>	Daphnis et Chloé	<b>34</b>	Study in Canonic Form, Op 56 No 5	<b>69</b>	<b>Turnage</b>			
Cuerdas del destino	<b>57</b>	Piano works (various)	<b>71</b>	<b>Scriabin</b>		Cello Concerto – Prayer for a Great Man	<b>55</b>		
<b>Parry</b>				Piano works (various)	<b>94</b>	<b>V</b>			
Fantasia and Fugue, Op 188	<b>69</b>			<b>Sechter</b>		<b>Varèse</b>			
My soul	<b>81</b>			Prelude	<b>55</b>	Un gran sommeil noir	<b>80</b>		
There is a country	<b>81</b>			<b>Séraphin</b>		Tuning Up	<b>40</b>		
				Prélude (en forme de pavane)	<b>55</b>				
				<b>Sheppard</b>					
				Media vita	<b>81</b>				
				<b>Shostakovich</b>					
				Cello Sonata, Op 40	<b>45</b>				

# Alan Davey

The new Controller of BBC Radio 3 on his love of music and how a study of Norse literature fuelled a love of Scandinavian composers

**I** often talk about my tragic musical education! It lasted a year because I went to a grammar school which was going to turn into a comprehensive school. It became quite clear that the comprehensive school wasn't going to be offering music so the teachers took us through Grade 5 music theory in a year and taught us about Bach, and that was it. That was my education in classical music but there had always been music of various kinds at home. We found out when my dad died that he'd been in a band in the 1940s and actually was rather a good musician. I had his record collection to delve into – it was mainly '40s popular and jazz, and beyond.

So it was never a formal education until I was about 19 when I discovered Radio 3, and then I started to become interested in orchestral music. My first classical LP was Mahler's Fourth with Horenstein and the LPO. I'd heard Mahler in the Ken Russell film and started exploring through records, but I'd still not heard an orchestra live. I went to university in Birmingham the year after Simon Rattle had arrived; my first orchestral concert was at Birmingham Town Hall and consisted of Robin Holloway's *Clarissa Symphony* with the *Eroica* in the second half. And I'll never forget it! Hearing an orchestra live, and hearing the different textures that there are, I was hooked. I started going to the CBSO any time I could, sitting in the choir seats for £2, and learning about early 20th-century music, and Rattle took us on a journey through that repertoire. There was a sense that he was special – he could *explain* music by playing it.

**I think I** established an interest in late-Romantic music in Birmingham, and a love of Scandinavian music followed (*Gramophone* was very big on Stenhammar at the time!). I was studying Scandinavian languages at university – Old Norse in particular – so the world of Scandinavia was one I was naturally interested in, and the sound worlds that those composers created were very appealing. I think coming to Scandinavian music through the literature helped it make sense. The northern mind, if you like. I'm looking forward to a season on Radio 3 in December focusing on 'the idea of North', inspired by Glenn Gould's famous CBC documentary from 1967, using the excuse of the Nielsen and Sibelius anniversaries to look at literature, ideas and artistic responses to northern-ness.

**I think the** reason we in the UK respond so well to the music of Nielsen is that we share many traits with the Danes – the Danish sense of humour is not unlike ours, and their outlook on life is not that dissimilar. Maybe Nielsen's creating atmosphere and a sense of place, and if you look at English composers at the same time there's also a sense of atmosphere and a sense of place that's outside the ordinary.



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You can argue about its particular idiosyncracies, but it's a recording I go back to a lot – and on LP!

**I have always** been fascinated by the dynamic between conductor and orchestra, and from my seat in the choir I had a perfect view. A conductor has got to have the big idea, keep the whole grand sweep going, but also has to focus on the detail when needed. If you're a leader in a bureaucracy, or in any kind of organisation that's complex, you're like a conductor. You're the one who has to have everything in your head but you're also encouraging particular sections or players to be individual – as well as keeping everyone going in the same direction, and roughly at the same time!

**I think as** a nation we too often don't realise the depth and huge tradition that is there in our classical music-making. You've got the Arts Council-subsidised orchestras, and you've got the BBC-subsidised orchestras where public money is allowing things to happen that otherwise would not happen. The danger is that as music education becomes more difficult, we lose the golden thread. Which is why orchestras in this country are taking education so seriously – and *have* to. And at the BBC, we've got the Ten Pieces scheme, and the orchestras are playing in 200-odd schools, getting young people to experience orchestral sound and to want to explore it either immediately or later on in life. I think it's so important to keep the musical tradition alive. **G**





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